THE PEAKS, LOCHS & COASTS OF THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS

ARTHUR GARDNER

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with

One Hundred & Fifteen Photographs

BY

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INTRODUCTION

It is a rash proceeding for a mere Englishman to attempt to write a book about the Highlands, but I hope those better qualified to do so will pardon my presumption if I can show a genuine love for the wild hills and lochs of the north—a feeling with which the true-born Scot must always sympathise.

So many books have been written about the mountains that perhaps some excuse is needed for adding yet another to the number, especially as I can make no claim for the present volume as a contribution to scientific knowledge, or even as a record of adventure. It is not a guide-book, but is meant more as a supplement to the guide-books, supplying just those things which that most businesslike form of literature does not give. It is designed as a pictorial record of some of the most characteristic types of Highland scenery on a new plan, making its appeal especially to the eye by means of the photographs which are the *raison d'être* of the book, and accompanying them by just so much text as will explain the points they are intended to bring out, and describe the conditions under which they were taken.

Long and flowery descriptions of scenery are apt to be boring, and it is better to let the face of nature speak for itself in the pictures, and to add only such details as anyone turning over the pages will want to know, or to reinforce the impression by a few words where the camera fails to do more than hint at the splendour of nature's noblest efforts.

Roughly speaking, visitors to the Highlands may be divided into five categories. The first is composed of the cragsmen or climbers, men of iron nerve and tireless energy, who seek excitement in scaling pinnacles and chimneys, and despise the poor foot-slogger who climbs his mountain by the obvious route. The second class is made up of more ordinary people, who are content to enjoy the beauties of nature from a more or less safe standpoint ; who do not mind a reasonably long tramp over rough country, but do not hesitate to gain the best viewpoint by the easy way. My third class consists of the sportsmen—deer stalkers, grouse shooters and fishermen —to whom the hills and streams are pleasant accessories rather than the main objectives of their visit. The fourth is made up of the ordinary tourist, who goes by the usual stock routes, inspects the regular show places, but has not enough initiative to plan out trips for himself. The fifth and last is the unspeakable class of

tripper who scatters orange peel and sandwich papers in show places, and whose object is to let off his animal spirits in noise and vulgarity. Fortunately the last do not penetrate far into the Highlands, where the inhabitant, whatever his shortcomings, is a born gentleman.

From the above remarks the reader will no doubt have guessed that the writer of this book belongs to class two. It is from the point of view of the rambler rather than that of the climber that the subject will be approached in this volume. It is written mainly for those who love to tramp for miles over the hills, to search out the finest scenes by silent lake or roaring torrent, in wooded glen or wave-swept shore, or to worship in the solitude of the mountain top, and wonder at the wild splendour of crag and precipice in nature's sternest retreats.

Lovers of nature will, it is hoped, find some suggestions for future exploration in its pages, and a record of memorable scenes to take home with them after a holiday, and perhaps the Scotsman living far from his native home may value a pictorial record of the hills and glens among which he was born or spent his youthful days.

Even the climber, should he find the text dull and lacking in excitement, may enjoy photographs of the scenes amid which he has spent many a happy holiday, for Ruskin's greased-pole

acrobat is happily rare among real cragsmen, and the majority of those who take up this strenuous form of exercise have done so because it brings them into touch with nature in its grandest and wildest forms.

To some men the savage and the sublime seem to offer a challenge to measure their own skill and endurance against the resistance of frowning precipice and dizzy ledge, and the joy of triumph after a successful climb is a feeling with which those can sympathise to whom a spice of danger adds not pleasure but anxiety, and whose more placid temperament is content with the vision of beauty attained by reasonable effort and no undue risk to life and limb. The climber, too, in return may feel some bond of sympathy with his less ambitious friend if the latter really loves the mountains. And, as climbers sometimes grow old, or marry anxious wives, even they may in later life enjoy the kind of tramp described in this volume, and may be glad to have in it some pictured memories of pleasant days among the hills.

With the sportsman we have a bone to pick later on, but for the tourist, using the word in the narrow sense explained above, we have more hope. He is not often found north of the Caledonian Canal, and abounds chiefly along the steamer routes, and the more accessible country

in the south and west. The first chapter will therefore appeal most to him, but perhaps the perusal of these pages will tempt him to venture farther afield, and to aspire to a more honourable place in our second category.

It is, indeed, one of the main objects of the book to show what a magnificent holiday playground exists in the north and west for our people jaded by the rush and complications of modern life. It is not generally recognised what a superb stretch of country is lying at our doors, and those who have already found it out would welcome other kindred spirits to share their quiet pleasures, and would not be sorry to see some improvement in accommodation and means of access, which could easily be made without importing any of the turmoil of modern life, from which we should like to preserve this region as a sanctuary for ever.

This will, I am afraid, exclude the interests of our fifth class, the tripper, but his outlook and sympathies are so different from the rest that it is impossible to cater for him here.

And now for the sportsman! With the fisherman we have no quarrel. His conversation may at times become tedious to those who do not share his tastes, and he is always praying for the type of weather that other people do not want, but he helps to support the right sort of inn in the remoter districts, and may find here and there in

these pages a picture of some loch beside which he has spent happy hours, for the patient waiting required by his pursuit must give plenty of opportunity for the quiet contemplation of the lovely scenes around him.

It is different, however, with the deer stalker. He is rich and powerful, and has sought to make the whole of the north into a private enclosure, from which not only the lovers of nature should be excluded, but even the natives whose forefathers have dwelt there for centuries should be driven out.

In the old days when the Highland chieftain dwelt among his tenants it might have seemed presumptuous for the stranger to raise a protest against exclusion, but now that the chiefs have mostly been driven by excessive taxation to let or sell their rights to the American millionaire or the war profiteer, we have to face a different problem. A new purse-proud owner is more difficult to deal with than the old laird with his ancient tradition of service to those about him in return for his position and rights. In a recent book Dr E. A. Baker[1] has attracted much attention by his strong protest against the present state of affairs under which individuals can appropriate vast tracts of country to their own exclusive use, and can make them practically inaccessible, in spite

[1] *The Highlands with Rope and Rucksack*, by E. A. Baker, D.Lit., M.A. (Witherby. 1923).

of rights-of-way, by letting roads and bridges fall into disrepair, and by closing the only inns or places of refreshment which in former days made visits to such places possible. He puts forth a strong plea for better access to what ought to be a national sports ground, in which there is ample room for the lovers of wild nature and solitude to find that spiritual refreshment so much needed to-day.

It is not necessary to repeat Dr Baker's arguments here, but I should like to take this opportunity to associate myself with him in his protest. That one-fifth of the whole surface of Scotland should be given up to private deer forests is surely a scandal that needs to be dealt with, and though I have personally been little interfered with in the early spring, when no harm could possibly be done to sporting interests, most people are only able to take their holidays in summer or autumn, and the closing of inns is a real grievance.

Economically it cannot be sound to devote so much territory to provide a few weeks' sport for the favoured few. Deer are destructive beasts and destroy the native forests by eating the young trees; they support fewer men than their predecessors the sheep, and venison, except in the eyes of those who have shot it, is a poor substitute for mutton. Hunting is a primitive instinct of man, and no doubt there is a certain excitement

in stalking an elusive beast like the deer, but modern weapons of precision, and skilful beaters, often reduce this so-called sport to a mere butchery, and it can hardly be argued that the slaughter of a noble animal is such a refining pastime for the great ones of the earth that it is worth while to devote so large a portion of the country to such a purpose, or to depopulate glens which once supported a happy and prosperous population, and to shut out thousands who are yearning for the peace and solitude which only a mountain country can give.

This is no place to discuss the crofter question, or to invade the realm of politics, but it is impossible not to call attention to the problem. Cannot some public-spirited millionaire, or group of millionaires, more enlightened than the rest, be induced to perpetuate his name and erect an enduring monument to his memory in the hearts of generations of mountaineers yet to come, by presenting a tract of this splendid country to a Scottish equivalent of the National Trust? What a glorious national park could be formed of the country between Loch Broom and Loch Torridon, with its succession of wild mountains and romantic valleys! What an ideal combination of sea and hill would be available if the Shiel Inn could be reopened, and others, comfortable but unpretentious, could be established on Loch Hourn and

Loch Nevis, with the hinterland thrown open for those who wish to wander at their own free will!

The Cuillin Hills of Skye, too, though restrictions there are less severe, would be a noble gift, especially if it were made possible to obtain reasonable accommodation at Camasunary and Glen Brittle, and the footpath through Glen Sligachan improved.

Some such scheme need not interfere with the present inhabitants, and it would be possible to reclaim much land for the crofters, and in many places to create forest industries, without spoiling the wild beauty of the remoter glens, or putting any obstacle in the way of those who wish to visit the best viewpoints, or to ramble over the more desolate heights above.

Perhaps, however, this is a mere idle dream, and the remedy for the political part of the problem will come from those who desire to commercialise the Highlands by the establishment of new industries depending on the water-power available there as nowhere else in Britain, as has been done by the British Aluminium Co. at Loch Leven.

Such a solution, however, needs careful watching, as it brings ruin and destruction in its train. Some men are so made that they cannot see a fine waterfall without longing to put it into pipes, and those who know Snowdonia with half its moun-

tains blasted into quarries, and lovely valleys reduced to mere rubbish heaps, will dread the extension of such activities to the yet unspoiled mountains of the north. Some foresight should therefore now be shown to protect the finest areas before the establishment of such industries makes the cost prohibitive.

It is all the more important to preserve some place where the beauties of nature can be enjoyed now that so much of the Lowlands round the big towns has been reduced to dust and ashes, so that the smoke of the country goes up as from Sodom and Gomorrah. How can those compelled to live in such places be expected to become healthy and useful citizens if there is no sanctuary in which to refresh their thirsty souls ?

Even afforestation schemes should be considered with a view to the natural features. Where the old scattered forest still exists, as in Rothiemurchus, or on the shores of Loch Maree, it would be wicked to replace it by ordered rows of firs and larches in thick plantations. There are thousands of acres which would be improved by planting, even of the most scientific and commercial character, without disturbing the scenes where the ancient Scots pines cling to rock and crag, and give that picturesque effect beloved of artists.

I would also add one plea, that where planting is undertaken the true Scots pine should be used

instead of the clumsy exotic varieties which are often substituted for it. From the artistic point of view there is no comparison between the two.

Like most people I first made the acquaintance of the Scottish Highlands in August—now nearly a quarter of a century ago. We were favoured with exceptionally fine weather, so fine indeed that only one small patch of snow remained in the northern gullies of Ben Nevis ; but I did not fall in love with the country at once, as I did with the English Lake District on my very first visit. After the marvellous compactness of the English Lake scenery, with its infinite variety compressed into so small a compass, Scotland seemed straggling and spread out. There were, no doubt, bigger mountains and wilder glens in the north, and individual features were finer than anything that even Scafell or Borrowdale could show, but the walks were too long ; and the best bits were often separated by vast tracts of featureless moorland and bog.

It was only after the war, when Continental travel was disorganised and uncomfortable, that I again turned my footsteps northwards. This time I had an opportunity of going in the spring, and it was only then that the full charm of the Highlands burst upon me. Since then I have gone back again and again at about Easter-time, and have never been disappointed.

The spring months are certainly the best time for that part of the world. Statisticians tell us that April, May and June are the driest months of the year, and, though the weather is always fickle, there is a better chance of fine days then than at any other time. Long spells of bad weather are unusual in the spring, and if there are April showers, or even storms of sleet and hail, the sun comes out in between them, and the glorious cloudscapes soon compensate for the discomfort caused by the showers.

From a photographic point of view this is the weather most to be desired. The clear, washed air and sunlit clouds, throwing their shadows over sloping hill and glistening lake, give the camera its best opportunities. Then, too, there is usually a sprinkling of snow over the higher summits; gullies and hollows are picked out in gleaming white, and the mountain monarchs stand out above their lesser satellites like Alpine giants. Even the russet and gold of autumn cannot give the variety and glamour to the landscape that the spring snow brings in its train.

Nearly all the photographs in this volume were taken in April or May, and these are probably the best months for the picture maker, though the spring foliage of early June gives many an opportunity in the more wooded glens of the centre and east. Spring days, too, are long, and in June

there is little fear of being benighted on the hills in these northern latitudes.

Except just at Easter the inns are empty, but for a few stray fishermen, and elaborate arrangements for accommodation need not then be made beforehand. Above all, the deer forest blockade is far less severe, and, as no possible harm can be done to the shooting by wanderers over the hills in the off season, keepers are less on the look-out to turn back the invading mountaineer, and sometimes can even be prevailed upon to supply him with a welcome cup of tea.

The only disadvantages of a spring holiday are the frequent occurrence of cold winds, and in dry weather the smoke from burning heather, fired by shepherds in order to bring up the fresh young shoots which provide fodder for their flocks. Cold winds, however, may be encountered at any time, and if they bring hailstorms instead of rain conditions are much pleasanter, as the hail bounces off without wetting one's clothes; besides, hail showers are usually soon over and are followed by intervals of bright, hot sunshine. I have sat under a wall basking in the genial rays of the spring sun with the snow driving over my head, and if it is winter on one side of a rock it may be summer on the other.

There is also another great advantage in an early holiday: the midges which are so troublesome in

the summer are not yet active—a very real relief for those who have only visited the heathery hills in summer.

A few words may not be out of place here on the *sport* of mountain photography.[1] I have used the word designedly, as to make good pictures of this class of landscape much the same qualities are required as are needed to make a good sportsman in the usual meaning of the word. Patience, waiting for the right effect, readiness to seize the opportunity when it comes, quickness in appreciating the necessary conditions of composition and lighting to be most effective; all those are just as much wanted to direct the camera as the gun.

But in other ways the serious photographer[2] comes out still better in the comparison. Not only is his art comparatively cheap, but it is constructive, not destructive. The grouse shooter, when he has eaten his bird, has nothing to show for his prowess beyond an empty memory of the number of brace he has brought down, but the photographer who has chased his effect over the hills with success has a pictorial record that can

[1] I have elaborated this subject in my book on *The Art and Sport of Alpine Photography*.

[2] I do not, of course, take too seriously the mere snap-shotter, who lets fly at anything, and sends his films to a professional to be developed. He may meet with an occasional success, half by accident, but experience and taste are required to produce something more.

give him pleasure for the rest of his days—or, at any rate, until he has produced a better.

Except painting there is perhaps no better æsthetic training for the eye than the art of the camera, and, to my mind, a good photograph is more satisfactory than any painting, save that of a real master of the craft.

The contemplation and appreciation of the beauty of nature, especially in its grandest manifestations, when sea and mountain forms are so inextricably mixed as on the west coast of Scotland, are a refining and ennobling experience; and an art that brings us into closer touch with such scenes not only brings joy and peace to our hearts, but is also one of the best forms of education for our souls.

To search out the best viewpoint, to be there at the right moment when weather and lighting conditions are perfect, is a fascinating pursuit, and no easy one; but nature is full of delightful surprises, and frequently our most successful picture is not of the view we have tramped miles to secure, but of some unexpected beauty, suddenly revealed in all its glory, which has burst upon us on our way.

For this reason it is one of the secrets of success in this class of work always to have the camera ready, on every expedition, for the fickle climate of the west coast is full of surprises, and only

those who are ready to seize the opportunity when it comes will reap the reward.

It is therefore better to rely on small and light apparatus which can be carried easily, and I recommend the popular quarter-plate camera ($4\frac{1}{4}'' \times 3\frac{1}{4}''$) as the most suitable. Enlargements can be made to any reasonable size, and if glass plates, which are infinitely superior to films, are used, the burden of carrying larger sizes becomes a weariness to the flesh.

Lenses should not be of too short a focal length or there will be a tendency to dwarf the mountains, but if a long-focus lens be adopted there will be difficulty in dealing with the foreground. For general purposes a lens of $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 in. focus will be found most convenient for a quarter-plate camera, and though a good lens is a luxury, a very expensive one is not altogether indispensable for this class of work.

Great care is necessary in selecting a suitable foreground, as this is one of the most essential elements in producing a good composition. Something is always wanted to give the right balance, and throw the distance into the proper perspective, and this is one of the first problems that a beginner in this class of work must study.

In making a picture, too, it should be remembered that photography, as the name implies, is the art of delineating objects by means of light

and shadow. The best results will not always be those which appeal to the painter in colour, for colour-photography has not yet reached the stage when it can give a really satisfactory reproduction of the more delicate gradations of the colours of nature.

The most effective shading and light contrasts are to be found in the clouds, and nowhere are clouds to be seen in greater glory than among the mountains, or over the sea. It is, therefore, in the kind of weather that we associate with April showers that the photographer of broad landscapes of the kind illustrated in this book will find his best inspiration.

That is one reason why, as already stated above, I claim that the early spring is the best season for the Highlands. A long period of set-fair weather, with an easterly wind, is apt to produce a haze which takes all the life and beauty out of the landscape, and though suitable for mountain ascents it will not give the photographer much opportunity except for small subjects or detailed work.

Ingenious people sometimes attempt to produce striking effects by combining clouds from one picture with a landscape from another. Such productions, however, will seldom satisfy the eye of a trained artist, or keen observer of nature, in a big landscape. Here the sky should be an essential

part of the picture, and it is almost impossible to get all the shadows and reflections right in a composite picture, especially where water is a feature. I have therefore avoided all such devices in the pictures here reproduced,[1] and for the kind of subject here treated I have kept to the old-fashioned straight photograph as the only one giving satisfactory results for the purpose set before me. There are many methods adopted by show photographers for suppression of unnecessary detail, or for making their productions look like etchings or paintings, but these usually mean sacrificing the very elements in which the camera excels in a hopeless attempt to compete with results much better attained through another medium.

Those who intend taking a holiday in the Highlands on the lines suggested in this book must adopt one of two plans. The young and active may put a rucksack on their backs and tramp from place to place through the valleys or over the hills as circumstances or weather conditions tempt them, sleeping each night in some fresh place, and prepared, if necessary, even to face a night out under a rock. They are able thus to keep farther from the beaten track, and to reach spots which are inaccessible to those who have

[1] With one insignificant exception, which I leave to the reader's eye to discover.

to get back to one of the sparsely scattered inns forming their base of operations.

Personally, however—and I think most men who have reached middle age will agree with me—I prefer the second alternative of fixing upon some one centre from which to explore the surrounding country, and then, if the holiday is long enough, moving on to another. This scheme allows a reasonable quantity of baggage, and changes of clothes, especially of boots, that greatest comfort of all.

Weight-carrying comes easily to some, but I must confess that I find the pleasure of a long walk much interfered with by a heavy burden on my back, and the photographic apparatus, a light mackintosh and the lunch, are quite as much as I care to carry.

The walks and explorations described in these pages have been made on this plan, and can, therefore, be repeated in reasonable comfort by any good walker who does not mind a rough tramp, or pine for unnecessary luxuries.

There are many varied types of scenery in the Highlands, and the object of this book is to try to give a record of some of the leading types rather than to provide a guide-book.

The chief division is between east and west from an artistic point of view ; though geographically the Grampians or the Caledonian Canal might

seem more obvious lines of demarcation. There is of course no fixed point at which one can say that east gives place to west, but there can be no doubt that the climate seems to change somewhere near the watershed.

It is often fine on one side when it is wet on the other, and the western valleys enjoy a much milder winter than the east coast. On the other hand the east is much drier than the west, and, though weather can never be depended on among mountains, there is more chance of fine settled days than in the west. In spite of this, however, there is a wonderful charm about the west country that more than makes up for this disadvantage. The very changeableness of the weather adds interest to the landscape, with fresh effects every hour, and new beauties revealed with every change of lighting or shifting of shadow.

I have no wish to belittle the loveliness of the wooded glens of Tay or Tummel, or the grim solitudes of the Cairngorms, but there can be no question that the scenery of the west is finer. The long arms of the sea running for miles inland, the fringe of islands, the abrupt crags of the mountains, all give a diversity to the scene which can be found nowhere else. Everything is more compact, and the huge tracts of bog or dull moorland that separate the beauty spots of the centre and east are much less evident or absent altogether.

The traveller by the Highland Railway between Perth and Inverness will realise my meaning. After leaving the woods at Blair Atholl, there is little of interest in the rounded and shapeless hills, or dreary uplands of Drummochter, until he gets down again to Kingussie or Aviemore. Here and there a glimpse of a lake gleaming like silver among the encompassing hills adds a touch of beauty to the scene, but for the most part I am quite content to leave these dreary wastes to the deer stalker and sportsman, if only he would allow better access to the glorious country beyond.

It is curious how much more room the eastern mountains seem to take up than the western. The result is that though higher than anything except Ben Nevis they do not look their height, and are far less impressive than the smaller but more abrupt ranges of Ross or Skye, or the isolated hills of Sutherland. It means a whole day's tramp to reach the foot of the Cairngorms, and to explore their tops and innermost recesses requires an expenditure of energy that makes the expedition an athletic feat rather than a pleasant ramble, and so puts them outside the scope of the present volume.

It is not mere altitude that makes a mountain impressive but comparative altitude, and the western hills preserve a much more satisfactory proportion between height and area. Then, too,

it must be remembered that most of them rise straight up from sea-level, whereas the Cairngorms can only be seen from a wide valley itself 700 to 1000 feet above the level of the sea.

Travellers from Inverness spend half a day in the train without losing sight of Ben Wyvis, a dull flat-topped lump of a hill that takes up as much room on the map as the whole many-peaked range of the Cuillin Hills in Skye. It is, therefore, with the more varied scenery of the west, its shapely hills and winding lochs, and above all that marvellous mixture of mountain, sea and sky that give it its peculiar fascination, that I propose to deal in this volume.

For convenience the subject will be divided into four chapters: the first will deal with the better-known tourist country of the south-west, including Ben Nevis; the second with the western coasts and channels north of the Caledonian Canal; the third with the wild ranges of Ross and Sutherland; and the fourth with the Isle of Skye.

Doubtless this will be very incomplete, and many other chapters could be added if time and space allowed, but these few selected areas will give an opportunity to bring out the most characteristic features of Highland scenery, and it is always open to those who want more to go and explore for themselves.

It remains to make the usual apology for my

attitude towards the Gaelic spelling of the names. It is a pity that so many grand mountains should have been afflicted with such appalling names, given an even more forbidding appearance by the elaborate, pedantic methods adopted in the orthodox spelling.

It is difficult to feel the same intimate affection for a mountain whose name we cannot pronounce as we can feel for Scafell or Snowdon. The Gaelic language seems never to have been meant to be written down. It abounds in sounds that no tongue not brought up to it can produce; its genders are chaotic, and its inflexions affect the beginning or middle of the word rather than the end, making the ordinary type of dictionary almost useless.

It is claimed that the orthodox spelling is phonetic, but this end is only attained by an elaborate system of giving new sounds to letters, or to combinations of letters, which alter or cancel one another, and make the words so long and forbidding in appearance that they rouse the same sort of repulsion in the mind of a stranger that the old-fashioned art student feels on visiting an exhibition of Cubist pictures.

The names themselves are also very unsatisfactory. The ordnance surveyors seem to have twisted them about in a vain attempt to get some non-existent meaning into them, and where no

native name existed they seem to have taken long descriptions, translated them into the best Gaelic they could manage, and to have used the sentence as a name.

If, on being questioned as to what he called a certain hill, the peasant replied that he usually described it as the red hill behind the son of So-and-so's cottage, the "red hill behind the son of So-and-so's cottage" translated into Gaelic becomes the name the wretched hill has to go by ever after. Fortunately, about a quarter of all the mountains in Scotland are called the "Red Mountain," and when one has learnt that DEARG is pronounced JERRUG one has the key to a very large proportion of the names.

Under these circumstances I have been tempted, whenever an Anglicised form of a name has been at all widely recognised, to use this instead of frightening my English readers with its correct equivalent. But where these do not exist I have usually been forced to use the form adopted by the ordnance maps. The solution is not perfect, but seems best under the circumstances, and if I make no pretensions to be an authority in the matter I hope the purists will have the greater mercy.

PLATE 2. Loch Long. (p. 36)

PLATE 3. Loch Long and Cobbler. (p. 36)

CHAPTER I

THE SOUTH-WEST

This chapter will deal with places south of the Caledonian Canal. As most of the well-known tourist resorts are to be found in this part of the country I propose to treat it in a rather summary fashion in order to leave room for a more detailed description of the lesser-known regions farther north.

Many familiar scenes, such as the Trossachs or Glencoe, will not be illustrated, and those illustrations which do appear will be selected as typical examples, or because I happened to see the places under striking or unusual conditions.

One of the best of the easily accessible centres from which to explore the beauties of the Southern Highlands may be found at Arrochar, on the West Highland Railway. It is situated at the head of Loch Long, just at the narrow isthmus separating this salt-water loch from Loch Lomond. From this strategic point expeditions may be made not only along the shores of both lochs, but to the surrounding hills, and they can be extended at will by making use of the railway.

Loch Long is long and narrow, and gradually increases in interest as the head is approached, though the ugly sheds recently erected by the pier, in connection with the submarine station not far from Arrochar, are a blot on the landscape.

Plate 2 is a view looking down the loch from near the head, taken on one of those exquisite showery days of bright sunshine, with broken clouds reflected in the water, which provide the ideal conditions for the photographer.

The chief feature of Loch Long is the mountain usually known as the Cobbler (Plate 3), whose extraordinary outline is the most remarkable thing of its kind in the Southern Highlands. The actual summit is a tower, which presents something of a problem to the inexperienced rock-climber, but the main platform from which it rises is easily reached from the back in spite of the formidable appearance of the eastern face of the mountain.

Loch Lomond is so well known that it needs no description here. The finest part is the narrow northern half, where the hills descend in steep crags into the water, but the wider southern portion, though the shores are comparatively tame, can look grand in stormy weather, with black clouds driving across the heavens, their dark and ragged edges rendered all the more gloomy by a few stray rays of watery sunshine

PLATE 4. Loch Lomond. (p. 37)

PLATE 5. Loch Lomond from Inversnaid. (p. 37)

PLATE 6. Ben More from Crianlarich. (p. 38)

PLATE 7. Ben Lui. (p. 38)

from the realms beyond, while the sullen waters of the lake are lashed by the gale into angry little wavelets breaking on the stony shore (Plate 4).

From the greater part of the lake the cone of Ben Lomond is a striking feature, but the finest mountain outline is that seen across the lake from Inversnaid, the pier at which tourists land for the coach bound for the Trossachs. Lovers of a quiet life will do well to let the crowd hurry on in the coach and themselves linger awhile in this beautiful spot before walking on to Loch Katrine. The hills on the farther shore rise to over 3000 feet in height, and form a noble group, which looks especially impressive when the weather is clearing up after rain, and low clouds are rolling round the flanks of the mountains, adding enormously to their apparent size (Plate 5).

Crianlarich, where the West Highland and Callander and Oban railways intersect, is another excellent centre. It is also a good place at which those who dislike night travelling can break their journey, as there is a good day train to London, reaching Euston in time for bed, though there is still no corresponding service in the other direction, Stirling and Perth being the best halting-places on the way to the north-west from London.

Crianlarich is situated in a wide upland valley, 500 or 600 feet above the sea, of a rather desolate and severe character, except where the river

widens out into little lakes. It is surrounded by lofty and imposing mountains, of which the twin peaks of Ben More (3843 feet) and Stobinian (Am Binnein, 3827 feet) are the highest. When deep in snow, as the present writer saw them in the snowy spring of 1922, they look very fine, especially when seen from a few miles away on either side of the village, far enough off to get a profile view of the range with the two great pyramids in their proper proportion.

From Crianlarich itself Ben More alone is visible (Plate 6), but it towers up grandly over the valley. The next mountain to the westward, Cruach Ardrain (3428 feet), is a fine object, but perhaps the finest view of all is obtained when approaching Tyndrum, the next station on the railway, where there is also an hotel, which makes a good stopping-place. Here a long, straight valley branches off with the magnificent form of Ben Lui (Laoigh, 3708 feet) at its head. Covered with snow, as it was in 1922 when the photograph reproduced in Plate 7 was taken, this mountain presented quite an Alpine appearance. But, as we were in bad training at the beginning of a holiday, we hesitated to attack such a formidable peak, and were tempted to climb instead a lower height on the other side of the valley called Beinn Chuirn (2878 feet), partly because the lower slopes were less buried in snow, and

PLATE 8. Ben More, etc., from Beinn Chuirn. (p. 39)

PLATE 9. Loch Tay. (p. 39)

partly because we felt that, under such conditions, the view of Ben Lui would be finer than the view from Ben Lui. Our expectations were more than justified, as not only did Ben Lui look magnificent all the time, but a wonderful panorama was spread out before us in every other direction as well. To the west Cruachan raised its double peak; farther north a sea of mountains faded away in the direction of Ben Nevis, while nearer at hand Ben More, Stobinian and Cruach Ardrain rose proudly over the intervening ridges, gleaming in their snowy mantle, and looking so vast through a slight haze that one could almost imagine them some great Himalayan range instead of the modest hills of our own familiar land (Plate 8).

By the help of the railways many other good expeditions can be made from Crianlarich. The upper end of Loch Lomond, Loch Tulla and Loch Tay can all be reached easily. We illustrate Loch Tay (Plate 9) from the Kenmore end: one of the few photographs in this book not taken in the spring, but on one of those showery days of early autumn that recall the memory of April showers, when the brilliance of the sunshine is set off by the heavy but broken clouds, and the strong breeze lashes the surface of the lake into miniature copies of Atlantic rollers that dance and sparkle in the glorious light.

Travellers by the West Highland Railway will remember the famous sugar-loaf view of Schiehallion (3547 feet) across Rannoch Moor. It is well worth while to cross the moor to the shores of Loch Rannoch in order to admire this shapely pyramid rising in isolated splendour over the loch, and commanding all the country round. It is especially effective after a fresh fall of snow (Plate 10).

Ben Cruachan (3689 feet) has the reputation of being the finest mountain in the Southern Highlands, and, on the whole, this reputation is justified. It is a collection of seven or eight peaks, of which two are considerably higher than the others, and connected by a rocky ridge or saddle. Like Ben Nevis it is a shy mountain, for it is difficult to get a good general view of it except from a considerable distance, and only those who penetrate its innermost recesses can appreciate its real grandeur.

Ben Cruachan is best visited from Taynuilt, though Dalmally and the Loch Awe Hotel are also good starting-places. As they are all joined by the railway it does not much matter where the night is spent, but we voted for Taynuilt, as Loch Etive is more beautiful than Loch Awe.

Nobody visiting this region should omit to wander, at any rate for some distance, along the shores of Loch Etive. Long and narrow, it winds

PLATE 10. Loch Rannoch and Schiehallion. (p. 40)

PLATE 11. Loch Etive. (p. 41)

among the hills like a vast river, and the varied outlines of the surrounding mountains, backed, in the spring in any case, by the snow-capped heights over Glencoe, make up a never-to-be-forgotten picture, especially on a glorious spring day with sunlit clouds drifting over the blue of the sky, and dappling the hillsides with their fleeting shadows (Plate 11).

Our first attempt on Cruachan was made on a bright but unsettled morning, and we chose the Dalmally route as likely to give us a pleasant high-level walk to the summit. The ascent to the end of the ridge is quite a simple matter, but just after we had accomplished all the hard work, and were looking forward to the fine ridge walk, we were suddenly enveloped in a sharp little snow-storm, which proved the forerunner of a series. We pushed on, however, in the intervals, enjoying the grand cloud effects as furious little squalls of snow and hail chased one another over the landscape, the clouds sometimes forming a solid-looking arch from one peak to the next, and sometimes obliterating everything from our view.

As we reached the foot of the final peak the snow began in good earnest, and looked like settling down for the rest of the day. Such conditions made it necessary to abandon the rest of the expedition and beat a retreat towards a less inhospitable region lower down. We accordingly

made our way down into a deep corrie at our feet, and, after sliding and slipping down the steep snow-covered slopes, emerged from the snow-cloud to find that we had not lost our sense of direction, but were in a valley leading straight down to the road beside the shores of Loch Awe.

Our next attempt was made under very different conditions. The morning was a perfect one, and, wishing to run no risks of a change, we made straight for the nearer summit, which we reached with little trouble, and no difficulties beyond one or two steep pitches.

The view from the second, or Taynuilt peak, which is only 70 or 80 feet lower than the main summit, is much the finest, as it juts out towards Loch Etive in such a way as to command that beautiful arm of the sea from end to end, while the spurs of the main peak cut off the dreary moorland which forms the middle distance in the view from the highest summit. The main peak itself, too, is a fine object, especially when glittering with snow from top to bottom, as it was on that beautiful May day. Ben More and Ben Lui were peeping over its shoulder, their white tops glistening in the sunshine (Plate 12).

The weather was absolutely perfect from a photographer's point of view: the air was so clear that the Isle of Rum, though sixty miles

PLATE 12. Ben Cruachan, Main Peak. (p. 42)

PLATE 13. Loch Etive from Cruachan (p. 43)

PLATE 14. Cruachan, Taynuilt Peak (p. 43)

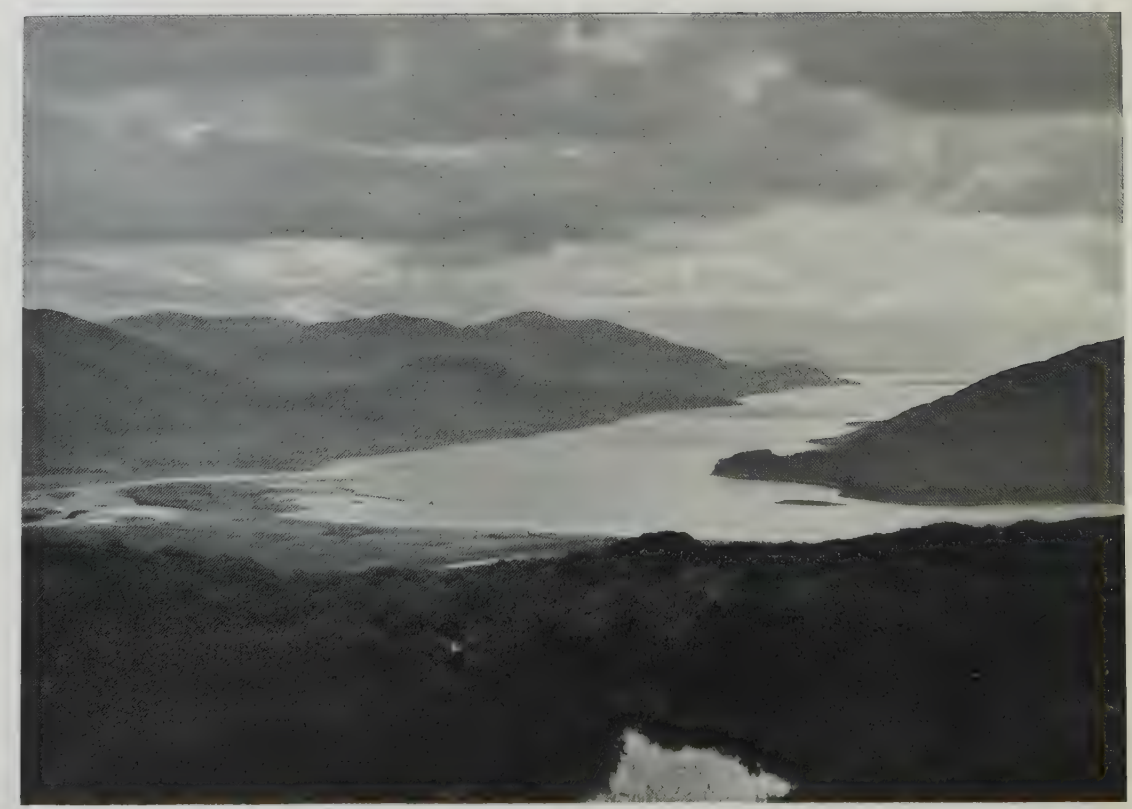

PLATE 15. Loch Linnhe from above Banavie. (p. 44)

away, could be distinctly seen in a small negative when developed, and even some of the islands of the Outer Hebrides could be made out. Glorious clouds were floating in the blue, with brilliant sunshine pouring through the spaces between them, lighting up their upper surfaces and casting blue-black shadows on their flanks.

Water adds enormously to the variety and beauty of a mountain landscape, and the view of Loch Etive, threading its way through the encircling hills till it ended beneath the splendid Glencoe peaks, made an absolutely perfect picture (Plate 13) on this wonderful day. Towering above even the Glencoe heights the familiar bluff outline of Ben Nevis asserted its supremacy, while farther away still ridge beyond ridge melted away into the distance. The nearer rocks were all covered with snow feathers three or four inches long, apparently formed by a wet mist driven against them by a freezing wind, and produced a very picturesque effect.

The Taynuilt peak (Plate 14) is not quite so fine as the other, but it makes a good foreground for the distant view of sea and mountain melting away into the west.

The ridge between the two peaks proved far less exacting than the guide-book descriptions had led us to expect, but perhaps the snow filling up some of the cracks between the big boulders made

progress easier than it would have been later in the year.

After we had spent an hour or so drinking in the marvellous view a curious gloom seemed to crawl up from the south, gradually swallowing up the distance and taking all the colour from the sparkling blue atmosphere; so we turned our steps homeward in order to reach our base of operations before we could be caught by the rain which the untoward change in the sky predicted. Just as we had packed up ready to descend a great golden eagle came sailing over the crags at our feet, and if the camera had been ready for action we might have added a new and unusual type of picture to this collection.

A visit to Ben Nevis is the indispensable climax for anyone interested in this part of the country. Not only is it the highest point in Britain, but, in spite of a certain humpiness of shape at the back, it has a range of crags which have few rivals in the country. Fort William, the starting-point, is a town of little interest in itself, situated at the head of Loch Linnhe where it bends round to form Loch Eil, at the entrance to the Great Glen, through which runs the Caledonian Canal.

The position is well shown in our photograph (Plate 15) taken from a hill above Banavie. The town occupies the rising ground on the left of the picture above the flats where the River Lochy

PLATE 16. Glen Nevis. (p. 45)

PLATE 17. Glen Nevis and Sgurr a' Mhaim. (p. 45)

PLATE 18. Glen Nevis. (p. 46)

PLATE 19. Glen Nevis. (p. 46)

discharges its waters into the sea. A portion of the Canal is seen in the middle, half-hidden by the heather in the foreground, and Loch Eil comes in on the right. The snow mountains rising over the hills behind the town are the peaks of Ben Vair (Beinn a' Bheithir, 3362 feet) which guard the entrance to Loch Leven opposite Ballachulish.

Fort William is not an ideal centre for a long stay as it is rather deficient in short walks suitable for doubtful weather, but the longer expeditions rank among the finest in the kingdom.

Glen Nevis is certainly one of the most beautiful valleys in Scotland. It consists of three sections, all of which are first-class examples of their own particular type of scenery. The lower valley is broad, contains some farms and cultivated land, and the river, for the most part, flows gently between wooded banks fringed with trees. Ben Nevis presents its dull side to the valley, but the heights of the Mamore Forest on the other side have a broken and varied outline, and look very impressive when there is plenty of snow about (Plates 16 and 17). Sgurr a' Mhaim (3601 feet) has a cap of white quartzite, giving it almost the look of a snow mountain even in the summer, when the real snows have all melted.

About five miles from Fort William the valley bends round, and the second section of the glen

is entered. This is entirely wild and filled with rocks, whilst trees crown every crag and eminence. Fine and rugged specimens of the beautiful Scots pine, with red bark and blue-green foliage, can be found here in abundance (Plate 18), and the river tumbles in a series of cataracts through a rocky gorge.

Two or three miles farther on the valley bends again and ascends by a wild rocky gorge (Plate 19) to the desolate upland country beyond, hemmed in by lofty peaks. Just beyond the gorge a fine waterfall descends from the mountain closing the view at the end.

The ordinary ascent of Ben Nevis (4406 feet) is by a pony track which avoids all difficulties, and conducts the climber by easy gradients to the top.

In the snowy spring of 1922, however, conditions were very different, and we found it quite an arduous enterprise. Deep snow began at the half-way hut, and the path was entirely obliterated, while the obvious route across certain hollows was blocked by heavy cornices of snow, forcing us to make a more or less direct ascent of the steep snow slopes instead of following the gentler summer route. Stumbling over half-buried rocks and plunging through deep snow is a particularly tiring sort of exercise, and we were very glad to reach the ridge, from a projecting

PLATE 20. Ben Nevis. (p. 47)

PLATE 23. Carn Mor Dearg. (p. 49)

spur of which we had a fine view of the tremendous precipices of the northern face (Plate 20).

All along the top the edge was heavily corniced (Plate 21), making great care necessary when approaching anywhere near the edge. The last part of the walk was less steep, but was quite hard enough work in the deep loose snow, especially as the weather was looking doubtful, with occasional clouds and snow flurries which made it necessary to hurry for fear of losing our way back. If a thick mist had settled down it might have been easy to go astray, for the wind was blowing little drifts of snow from the cliffs across the mountain, quickly obliterating the tracks we had made on the way up.

The snow on the top must have been exceedingly deep, as we suddenly found ourselves walking over the roof of the little inn which serves summer visitors with refreshments, the only sign of the building being a chimney-pot pushing up through the snow.

The view from the top is very extensive, but I sometimes think that the view from the highest summit loses something by the mere fact that one is looking down on everything. Mountains are apt to fall short of their full dignity when looked down upon, and an uninterrupted series of lesser heights stretching away as far as the eye can reach may become monotonous in the absence of

any striking or pre-eminent object. A stretch of water sometimes gives the necessary contrast, as in the view from Cruachan shown in Plate 13, and Loch Eil serves something of the same purpose in the panorama from Ben Nevis, though the surrounding hills are less striking.

The most effective thing, however, on this occasion was the view of the snow-covered heights of the Mamore Forest (Plate 22), the highest peak of which is Binnein Mor (3700 feet). Bidean nam Bian (3766 feet) and the other Glencoe mountains were also fine objects rising over the intervening ridges. In the deep snow, with all Scotland lying at our feet, and soft mists drifting over the landscape and occasionally enveloping us in their folds, we felt wonderfully remote from the busy world in which we spend most of our lives. It is good at times to go up into the hills, like the prophets of old, and there, alone with the clouds of heaven above us, and the noblest of terrestrial forms at our feet, to imbibe something of the spirit of infinity and worship before the throne of the Creator of them in humility and awe!

The best and most comprehensive view of the precipices of Ben Nevis is obtained from Carn Mor Dearg (4012 feet), the mountain immediately opposite to the crags on the north-east. Extensive bogs have first to be crossed till a fine glimpse of the great rock wall is obtained from the mouth

PLATE 24. Ben Nevis. (p. 49)

PLATE 25. View from Carn Mor Dearg. (p. 49)

of the corrie beneath it, and then the opposite ridge has to be attacked. This is not particularly steep, and leads straight up to the top of the mountain.

The sharp summit (Plate 23) is an impressive object when covered deeply with snow, but is far less formidable than it looks. The top of Ben Nevis towers up grandly directly opposite (Plate 24), looking very different from the rounded hump it appears to be on the other side.

Under the wintry conditions prevailing when these photographs were taken the cliffs rose up magnificently from the snow-filled corrie, their edges picked out by a long, sharply cut cornice of deep snow. The distant view across the Mamore Forest mountains was also most impressive, the sharp snow-covered ridges in the foreground giving a very Alpine appearance (Plate 25).

Another most excellent walk from Fort William is to follow the road up the glen a little more than half-way along the first section, and then to turn to the right and climb the hills on the south side. Antiquaries may find an interesting vitrified fort on an eminence commanding a pass over into the next valley, and, just beyond this, a ridge begins leading up to Mullach nan Coirean (3077 feet), the first of the bigger mountains shutting in the head of the glen.

We chose a day of uncertain weather for this

expedition, as we were waiting for a more settled day for Ben Nevis itself, and had to spend a good deal of time crouching under rocks to get out of the icy blasts of wind that dashed hailstones and snow flurries into our faces. But the sun came out brilliantly between the showers, and the contrast between the blue sky and furious storm-clouds produced many beautiful and striking effects.

Plate 26 shows a particularly angry-looking snowstorm advancing upon us from the hills beyond Loch Linnhe. We felt a little nervous in our exposed position at the sight of this black column of cloud coming straight at us, and hastily sought out holes in the rocks in which to take cover, but it passed over in time like the others, the hail mostly bouncing off us without wetting our clothes, and the sun came out again more brilliantly than before. As the storm approached the clouds formed a complete arch across the sky of inky black vapour, under which the sun could be seen shining quietly in the fine interval beyond.

These conditions may mean a little discomfort while one is waiting for the hail to pass over, but they are extraordinarily beautiful, and give the photographer chances which seldom come to him in finer and more settled weather.

After the storm had passed we were able to proceed to the top of our mountain, obtaining

PLATE 20. Hailstorm from Mullach nan Coirean. (p. 50)

PLATE 27. Loch Linnhe from Mullach nan Coirean. (p. 51)

several very beautiful views of snowy ridges and gleaming waters, backed by glorious clouds sailing across the blue. They were especially fine when looking down the long stretch of Loch Linnhe (Plate 27) and, farther to the south, towards the grand peaks of Ben Vair over Ballachulish (Plate 28).

From the top the mountains over Glencoe stood up splendidly, the clouds just skimming over the top of Bidean nam Bian (3766 feet), the crowning height of that fine group (Plate 29).

CHAPTER II

WESTERN COASTS AND CHANNELS

In some ways the most characteristic scenery of the Western Highlands is to be found in that part of the coast lying opposite the islands of Eigg, Rum and Skye. Nowhere else is the sea so inextricably mixed up with the land, and nowhere else do mountain, sky and ocean combine in the same way to produce that infinite variety of form and colour which we associate with this terrestrial paradise.

Arms of the sea wind for miles among the hills, and narrow channels open out round unexpected corners where there was apparently no way through. In every mountain view there is that expanse of water which we have again and again pointed out to be one of the chief features required to complete the perfect mountain landscape.

From its formation, divided up by long fiords many miles round, it is not an easy district to explore without a yacht, and, even then, I always maintain that the best views are seldom obtained from the surface of the water. The photographer must have room to wander about on dry land in

PLATE 28. Ben Vair from Mullach nan Coirean. (p. 51)

PLATE 29. Glencoe Mountains from Mullach nan Coirean. (p. 51)

order to select the best foreground, and he will usually find that there will be a tendency to dwarf the mountains in his pictures unless he can climb, even a little, above the level of the sea.

The ideal solution perhaps would be to use the yacht merely as a movable hotel, taking it from place to place to serve as a base of operations from which walks and scrambles up the cliffs and over the hills could be made at pleasure.

For those, however, whose more modest purse will not run to such luxurious methods there are two means of access available: by the West Highland Railway to Mallaig and by the line from Inverness through Dingwall to Kyle of Loch Alsh. Boats connect some of the chief places, but they are small and infrequent, except at the height of the season, which is not usually the best time for a visit to these parts. The most useful service is the steamer which runs from Mallaig to Kyle and Portree.

In the old days there were other routes for the active pedestrian through the long straight glens that stretch almost across Scotland from the neighbourhood of Inverness to the west coast. They are seldom used now as the railways take most of the traffic; the consequence being that some of the inns have been closed, thus making the distance between them too long for the average man to tramp in a day.

The most beautiful of these valleys is Glen Affric, and even if the through route is not contemplated it is well worth while to break the journey north at Beauly, and penetrate this lovely valley as far as time and energies permit. The little Glen Affric hotel at Invercannich, where Glen Cannich and Glen Affric join, is the best, if not the only, place from which to explore these valleys; and as there is a fair driving road as far as Affric Lodge (the last part closed to motors) it is possible to get a lift for some distance to enable one to extend the range of operations.

My own visit was made at the beginning of June, when the fresh spring leaves were at their brightest, and patches of snow still remained on the highest hills to give them dignity and importance. The most beautiful view was one we discovered for ourselves on the low hills over the eastern end of Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin, reached by a branch valley running into the main one from the south, two miles south-west of Invercannich.

The shores of the lake, and lower portions of the hills, were thickly clothed with the old native forest, and the fresh young leaves of the birches, with the sun shining through them, made a striking contrast with the dark, blue-green foliage of the pines (Plate 30). Coming over the low hill,

PLATE 30. Glen Affric. (p. 54)

PLATE 31. Glen Affric, Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin. (p. 55)

from the park-like valley below, we found ourselves in a veritable Garden of Eden, with fairy-like silver birches dotted about in the rich brown of the dead bracken, and the gleaming waters of the lake beyond, backed by ridge behind ridge of mountain, culminating in the peaks of Mam Soul (3862 feet), and Carn Eige (3877 feet), the highest summits north of the canal.

In Plate 31 a glimpse of Loch Affric itself is just seen through the trees beyond the end of Loch Beinn a' Mheadhoin, and the sharp peak at the end of the vista in the extreme distance is Scour Ouran (3505 feet), which looks so splendid from Loch Duich on the other side. To the right of it the long ridge is Ben Attow (3383 feet), a mountain which has obtained an extraordinary and undeserved notoriety owing to a strange confusion on the part of some ancient cartographer, through whose enterprise it has found its way into the geography-books as the only mountain worth mentioning north of Ben Nevis. And this to the exclusion of many far finer, higher and more prominent peaks! To increase the confusion the ordnance surveyors have altered the name of the mountain to Beinn Fhada—apparently in an attempt to revenge themselves on their predecessors by causing the famous Ben Attow to disappear altogether, for it needs considerable faith to believe that both versions are

merely attempts by different methods to reproduce phonetically the same name.

By driving as far as Affric Lodge we were able to see the greater part of Loch Affric, and to make the ascent of Mam Soul (O.S., Mam Sodhail, 3862 feet). A stalkers' path made the walk quite an easy one after the wilder peaks farther north, but the distance from our base did not allow us to push on to Carn Eige, and by so doing add the highest peak north of the canal to our bag.

The view from Mam Soul was most extensive, for we looked right across Scotland from sea to sea, and, though it was June, great snow cornices still marked the edges of the ridges, one of which dipped far enough into a hollow to give us an opportunity for quite a good little glissade (Plate 32). In this picture the big, black hill near at hand, and on the right, is Sgurr nan Ceathreamhnan (3771 feet), the end peak of the range we were on ; the faint, triple-headed mountain peering over its shoulder in the distance is Ben Sgriol (3196 feet) over Loch Hourn, and the prominent peak in the middle is Scour Ouran, appearing over the long ridge of Ben Attow.

The distance between Invercannich and the old Shiel Inn was about thirty miles, a long but not impossible walk, especially if a lift could be obtained for the first ten or twelve miles along the

PLATE 32. View from Mam Soul. (p. 56)

PLATE 33. Loch Shiel and Ben Resipol. (p. 57)

road, but now that the Shiel Inn is closed it is another seven or eight miles to Dornie, the nearest shelter, and few are there of the present generation who are hardy enough to approach the west coast by this route. Most of us, especially if impeded with luggage, will certainly find it more convenient to arrive by one of the two railways.

The West Highland extension from Fort William to Mallaig first crosses the canal and then skirts the shores of Loch Eil. Farther on a glimpse is obtained of Loch Shiel, a long, narrow fresh-water lake set deep among the surrounding hills.

The voyage down this loch is a pleasant one, and the little inn at Acharacle at the other end is a convenient headquarters for exploring the surrounding country, though tracts of tiresome bog along the shores of Loch Shiel and between it and the sea, prevent it from being an ideal walking centre. Good walks may be made across the narrow isthmus to Loch Sunart, a long arm of the sea with good views of Ben Resipol. This mountain also stands up well from Acharacle itself (Plate 33), and it is a most attractive expedition to climb to the top as its isolated position, and the vast stretches of water at its foot, make it an exceptionally fine viewpoint.

The sea is first reached again at Loch Ailort, which bends round so sharply towards its entrance

that it is difficult to believe that it is not completely landlocked. The line then threads its way among wooded hills, with occasional views of the sea, and it is worth while to leave the train for a few hours at Glen Beasdale halt in order to explore the interesting coast scenery of Loch nan Uamh.

The shore is very rocky, with little wooded islets here and there and numerous promontories jutting out into the water, the whole making an admirable foreground for the ever-changing pageant of the sky, as cloud and sunshine chase one another in endless succession over the confused jumble of sea and land (Plate 34). A range of mountains over 2800 feet high form a fitting background towards the south-east, but I will not trouble the reader with their names, which are not easy to remember or spell (Plate 35).

Farther on we come to Arisaig, with its useful hotel, situated on an island-studded bay, with a fine view of the wonderful outline of the mountainous island of Rum. The latter must be well worth a visit, but is said to be so closely preserved that it is very difficult for a stranger to effect a landing.

Mallaig, at the end of the railway, is a convenient place from which to see the entrance to Loch Nevis, but the most attractive place to stop at on this part of the coast is Morar, on a beautiful

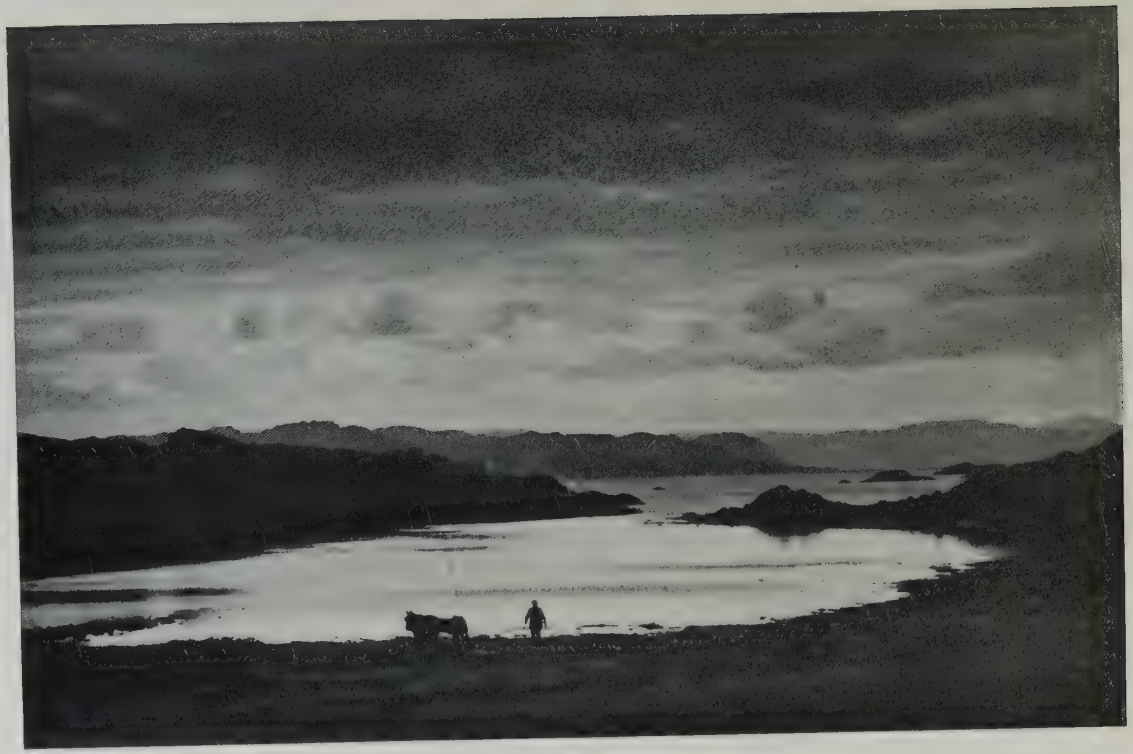

PLATE 34. Loch nan Uamh. Gathering Seaweed. (p. 58)

PLATE 35. Loch nan Uamh. (p. 58)

little bay near the narrow strip of land separating Loch Morar from the sea. I have found few places so well placed for watching the glories of the sunset as this. In the early spring the sun goes down behind the splendid peaks of Rum, and all the colours of the heavens are reflected in the waters of the bay, which are beautifully framed by the rocky headlands on each side (Plate 36). When sunset and dinner coincided our table manners were apt to deteriorate, for it became necessary to rush out with a camera between the courses to secure some special effect from the edge of the cliff.

It is extraordinary what an infinite variety of pictures can be obtained from almost the same spot under different conditions of weather and lighting. I have shown four examples here taken from within a few hundred yards of this hotel at Morar, all looking more or less in the same direction (Plates 1 (Frontispiece), 36, 37 and 38), but I could easily double or treble the number if space permitted, each one being quite different from the rest. Most of them were taken either at or a little before sunset, Plate 36 showing the sun sinking into a bank of cloud in the late afternoon, and lighting up a path of glory across the waters of the bay. The end of the island of Eigg is seen to the left of Rum, just behind the nearer headland, which is part of the mainland.

Plate 37 was taken in changeable weather, with slight showers passing between the spectator and the setting sun, the outline of Rum being but faintly seen through the intervening mists. In Plate 1 (Frontispiece) the sun is lower, a narrow bar of thick cloud making it possible to secure the photograph, while in Plate 38 the sun is disappearing behind the low line of cloud along the horizon, and lighting up with a glow of colour—which the camera must perforce leave to the imagination—the layers of glowing mist reflected in the glassy sea.

Besides the beautiful coast walks from Morar there are some very fine expeditions inland. The most obvious one is the track along the north shore of Loch Morar. This is a fresh-water lake about twelve miles long ; it is also of considerable interest to the geologist as it is over 1000 feet deep—deeper, in fact, than the sea for 150 miles out into the Atlantic beyond St Kilda. This is all the more remarkable as the lake is separated from the Sound of Sleat by only a narrow isthmus about half-a-mile wide, intersected by a beautiful little salmon river emptying the surplus waters of the lake into the ocean by a series of rapids. There is a group of wooded islands at the lower and broader end of the lake, but the quality of the scenery steadily improves as the head of the lake is approached.

PLATE 36. Rum from Morar. (p. 59)

PLATE 37. Morar. Sunset behind Showers. (p. 59)

PLATE 38. Morar. Sunset. (p. 59)

PLATE 39. Loch Morar. (p. 61)

An excellent view of it can be obtained from the hills about half-way along (Plate 39). This narrow lake is hemmed in on both sides by steep mountains, and the whole scene gives very much the impression of a Norwegian fiord.

About eight miles along the lake there is a narrow pass, between steep crags, leading through to Loch Nevis, one of the finest sea lochs along even this lovely bit of coast. Good walkers, who do not mind a tramp of twenty-two miles out and home again, may go through this pass, and, turning to the right, follow the shore for two miles as far as the rocks commanding the narrows dividing the upper and almost landlocked basin of Loch Nevis from the wider lower portion. From this point the view is very striking.

Most of the hills between the two lochs command fine views of both, and those who do not want such a long walk as that through the pass can thread their way through the bogs, and among the little tarns scattered about the rocky hollows, to the edge of the hills overlooking Loch Nevis. From about here a splendid idea can be had of upper Loch Nevis and of the grand mountain scenery round its head. The finest of these heights is Sgurr na Ciche (3410 feet), a shapely pyramid making an ideal culmination of the vista (Plate 40).

The entrance to Loch Nevis can also be explored

by following the coast from Mallaig, the terminus of the railway, and climbing up and down the pathless hills, and in and out of the little rocky bays that line the shore. The views across the loch are of surpassing beauty, and rarely can the mixture of sea and mountain be seen to better advantage.

The view shown in Plate 41 was taken looking across to Inverie Bay. The sharper peak under the big cloud rejoices in the name of Sgurr Coire Choinnichean (2612 feet), while the whiter and more distant mountain behind it is Ladhar Beinn (3343 feet), which overlooks Loch Hourn. Seen in such weather as is indicated in this picture, with superb, towering cumuli sailing across the brilliant blue sky, with the sparkling sea below, the rich velvety hues of the dying heather softening the harshness of the rocks in the foreground, and a touch of unearthly beauty added by the gleaming snows of the distant hill-tops, Loch Nevis certainly seems to live up to its name, which, being interpreted, is the Lake of Heaven.

The next inlet to the north is Loch Hourn—the Lake of Hell—and I am sorry I am unable to illustrate this, as, from all descriptions, the scenery is of a very high order. But it is extremely difficult of access, except by boat, and even then the tides and currents cause serious obstacles to small craft. The lower part of the loch, and the

PLATE 40. Loch Nevis. (p. 61)

PLATE 41. Loch Nevis. (p. 62)

entrance, can be seen by a long walk from Glenelg, a stopping-place of the Mallaig-Kyle steamers, where there is an hotel, and, if a trap can be obtained to drive along the indifferent coast road to Arnisdale, the narrow, upper reach can be attained on foot if a long day is devoted to the expedition.

The only other way is to drive the sixteen or seventeen miles from Tomdoun along Loch Quoich to Kinloch Hourn, and then to walk along the shore as far as time permits. I had hoped to put in a few days at Glenelg in the spring of 1923 but was prevented, and Loch Hourn must, therefore, join the list of other fine things which my readers must discover for themselves.

The other approach to this favoured portion of the coast is by the Highland Railway from Inverness, via Dingwall to Kyle of Loch Alsh. The last part of the journey, especially along the beautifully wooded lake at Achnashellach, and along the shores of Loch Carron, is particularly attractive ; so that anyone stopping in the neighbourhood should not be satisfied with the hurried glimpses from the train, but should walk at least from Strome Ferry to Plockton.

Strome Ferry was the original terminus of the railway, but since the line has been continued beyond this place it has fallen into decay, and the hotel has been closed. Crags of no great

height, but of striking shape, jut out into the water, which is here confined in a deep and narrow channel; but this channel opens out again into a broad sheet of water towards the head. The scenery here is of a quieter character than that of the neighbouring lochs, as the mountains do not rise so sheer out of the water, but the broader expanse of country, with the snowy tops of many distant mountains appearing over the varied outlines of the hills along the shore, is very pleasing, and gives this loch a character all its own. It is especially pretty here on a showery day, with the cloud shadows drifting over the wide expanse of hill-side, and occasional hail showers to give contrast to the sunshine beyond (Plate 42).

From Strome Ferry the road to Plockton runs beneath a magnificent range of crags, and then passes through the thick woods of the Duncraig estate, which give a richness to the landscape rare in this wild country.

Plockton itself is pleasantly situated on a little harbour commanding a good view of the crags, and it is worth while to go out behind the village on to the little rocky promontories overlooking the loch. The surface of the sea is here broken up by numerous rocky islands and low reefs, which provide excellent foregrounds for the artist or photographer (Plate 43). Farther on the Applecross Mountains stand up well, while, in the far

PLATE 42. Loch Carron from Strome Ferry. (p. 64)

PLATE 12. Loch Carron from Plockton. (p. 64)

PLATE 44. Loch Alsh. (p. 65)

PLATE 45. Loch Alsh. (pp. 65, 67, 70)

west, the wonderful outlines of the Skye hills add constant interest to the scene.

Kyle itself, the starting-point for Skye, is pleasantly situated on the straits, and has a comfortable little hotel owned by the railway company. The road to Balmacara goes inland, but there is a very pleasant walk along the cliffs overlooking Loch Alsh (Plate 44). In early spring, with snow low down on the hills and fresh storms raging inland, the view across these narrow waters can be exquisitely beautiful, though, at times, furious blasts of icy wind may make it difficult to enjoy the scene from an unsheltered position.

Fine views of sea and land can also be obtained from the hills on the farther side of Loch Alsh, near the entrance to Loch Duich (Plate 45). Our illustration was taken in stormy weather with bright intervals, and looking towards Skye. The narrows at the Kyle are well seen on the right, and the narrow, tide-swept channel of Kyle Rhea runs between the nearer slopes and the high hills above Kyle Akin, whose summits are just kissed by the storm cloud. The characteristic outline of the Broadford red hills and the jagged crests of the Cuillin are lost in a heavy shower sweeping across the island.

It is in weather like this that it is good to be beside the sea, with a wide expanse of water and broken mountain outline beyond. From such a

spot nature can best be studied in all its various moods, as sun and shadow, calm and storm follow one another in a quick and ever-changing succession of noble effects, never alike for more than a few minutes together. On the west coast there are many days like this—days hopeless for mountaineering on the big peaks inland, but by the sea always presenting something to watch and something to admire.

There is a good hotel at Balmacara for Loch Alsh, but the smaller one at Aird Ferry, by the Dornie ferry across Loch Long, is the best centre for all this district, now that the Shiel Inn at the head of Loch Duich has been closed.

The best walk from Balmacara is up Auchtertyre Hill (1481 feet), which has a surprisingly fine view of Loch Duich and the stately mountains round its head (Plate 46). A wooded headland divides Loch Alsh from Loch Duich proper, and the vista is closed by the fine range of the Kintail Forest, known as the Five Sisters, with the shapely peak of Scour Ouran (Sgurr Fhuaran, 3505 feet) towering up in the middle. This group makes an almost ideal finish to the view, and gives Loch Duich a claim to be reckoned among the very best of all Scottish lochs.

The whole composition of land, water and mountain from this hill is so fine that I am tempted to give another photograph from almost the same

PLATE 46. Loch Duich from Auchtertyre Hill. (p. 66)

PLATE 47. Snowstorm from Auchtertyre Hill. (p. 67)

spot, but taken under different conditions, when a sharp little snowstorm was passing over, from which Scour Ouran was just emerging (Plate 47). On the extreme left the white houses of the village of Dornie can be seen, with the Aird Ferry Hotel standing out in front of them, separated by the narrow channel which forms the entrance to Loch Long. The view of Loch Alsh shown in Plate 45 was taken from the top of the headland in the middle distance in front of the snowstorm.

We spent a very pleasant week at Aird Ferry. The weather was broken and stormy—so much so that we attempted only one real mountain walk, and had no opportunity of testing the steepness of Scour Ouran's formidable-looking slopes. It was, however, just right from a photographic point of view, and we had many beautiful low-level walks along the shores of the loch, and the hill-sides overlooking them.

We were kept indoors for only two half-days by a continuous deluge, and then, when the rain stopped for a little while, there were grand effects to watch as the heavy clouds drove over the mountains, with here and there a little gleam of watery sunshine lighting up the ripples on the water, and emphasising the blackness of the clouds around (Plate 48).

It is quite good sport on these occasions to sally forth between the showers with mackintosh

and camera, and find some suitable spot beside the sea from which to hunt the cloud effects whenever a suitable opportunity presents itself. But a good deal of patience is required for the game, as the light required shifts from one part of the picture to another, at one moment dazzling the eyes with the reflected glare from the backs of the waves, at another casting a gloom over the foreground that obliterates all detail, till one begins to despair of ever getting the right combination that will give a range of tones for reproduction within the power of the camera.

It is interesting, too, to see what very different effects can be got from the same spot, as I pointed out when describing the sunsets from Morar, and I have often secured half-a-dozen or more photographs from a place like that shown in Plate 48 which were so different from one another that it is hard to believe they were taken at the same place.

A ferry-boat plies between Aird Ferry and Dornie, and a longer crossing to Totaig on the opposite side of the entrance to Loch Duich is usually made by a motor-boat. The ferryman is summoned by a battered horn hanging up by the pier, which makes a noise like a cow in extreme agony, so that, if you are coming from the more distant shore, it is as well to give the ferryman notice when to look out for you, lest he should

PLATE 48. Loch Duich. (p. 67)

PLATE 49. Loch Duich from Totaig. (p. 69)

PLATE 50. Loch Duich. Sunshine and Showers. (p. 69)

PLATE 51. Loch Duich. (p. 70)

mistake you for an animal in distress and leave you stranded on an inhospitable shore miles away from anywhere.

The walk right round Loch Duich is strongly to be recommended. The prettiest bits perhaps are at Totaig and approaching the head, but the whole walk is fine. Totaig is situated at the tip of the headland, shown in Plates 45 and 46, dividing Loch Alsh from Loch Duich. It is beautifully wooded, and little rocky bays and headlands, crowned with trees, make a perfect setting for the splendid group of snow-capped peaks at the head of the loch (Plate 49).

The view shown in Plate 50 well illustrates the remarks made in the Introduction, where I spoke of the necessity of always having the camera ready for some unexpected effect which might be more beautiful than the view one had walked miles to see. I was just packing up in a heavy shower when the rain slackened and a sharp edge of black cloud formed an arch across the loch, under which the sun could be seen shining on a snowy peak in the distance. The effect was indescribably lovely as we gazed out of the gloom and rain towards the heavenly light beyond. This glimpse was quite unexpected, and lasted only for a minute or two, giving no time to select a foreground. I do not know how far the photograph will appeal to others, but to me, at any rate,

it recalls a beautiful effect in a way that no written description in a diary could do, and shows the necessity of being ready to seize the opportunity when it comes.

It is also worth while to climb the tree-clad hill above Totaig, which commands grand views in both directions. That of Loch Alsh we have already seen (Plate 45), and that of Loch Duich is shown here (Plate 51). A snowstorm is seen clearing off the Five Sisters, and the white peak of Scour Ouran itself can be faintly made out through the swirling vapours around it.

The mountains grow in size and importance as the head of the loch is reached, and the Five Sisters with Scour Ouran in the centre are most impressive, even when there is not much snow about, as shown in Plate 52, which was taken a few days before the fall that whitened the peaks for the photographs shown in Plates 49 and 50. The return journey can be made along the north side of the loch to Dornie, and every step of the way is interesting, especially some beautiful park-land a few miles from the head of the loch.

Just at the entrance to Loch Duich there is a ruined castle, perched on a rock, and surrounded by the sea at high tide. This is now being repaired by the present owner, who, it is said, contemplates living in it, but it is to be hoped that he will not follow the example of the original builders, who

PLATE 52. Loch Duich and the Five Sisters. (p. 70)

PLATE 53. Loch Long (Ross). (p. 71)

probably used it as a point of vantage from which to prey upon any unarmed traders happening to pass that way.

There is another pleasant walk to be had by the side of Loch Long, which must not be confused with the better-known loch of the same name farther south. It is five or six miles long, and very narrow, winding among the hills like a river. It opens out a little towards the head (Plate 53), displaying a good view of Ben Killilan (2466 feet) and Sguman Coinlich (2881 feet), but is best seen when the tide is not too low, as the receding water exposes a mile of mudflats at the extreme end.

The valley bends round to the right beyond the wooded crag seen in our picture. There are good walks to the Falls of Glomach, and, eventually, to Glen Cannich or Glen Affric, but these are very long, even if a lift be obtained as far as the end of the road at Killilan.

Going farther north the next deep inlet is Loch Torridon, which takes us to the border of the country to be described in the next chapter. It is surrounded by some of the wildest and grandest mountains in Scotland, but, like many of the best things in this part of the world, is very inaccessible. There is nowhere to stay except a small inn at Shieldaig, and much of the country round is deer forest.

The most practicable way of visiting it is to drive the ten miles or so from Kinlochewe and walk along the pleasant path overlooking the plantations on the south side as far as there is time before driving back. Right opposite rises the splendid peak of Beinn Alligin (3232 feet), with finely shaped buttresses supporting it on either side (Plate 54). Farther on there are some pretty birchwoods, and Liathach (3456) becomes more prominent, though this grand mountain is less imposing from this side than any other. Beinn Damh (2958 feet) on the south side looks as though it would command a very wide and beautiful view, and the whole of this region deserves more careful exploration than I have been able to give it.

PLATE 54. Loch Torridon and Beinn Alligin. (p. 72)

PLATE 55. Beinn Eighe. (pp. 74, 76)

CHAPTER III

THE WILDS OF ROSS AND SUTHERLAND

THE stretch of country between Loch Torridon and Loch Assynt contains the wildest scenery and grandest mountains on the mainland of Scotland. Nowhere else are the outlines so striking or the slopes so steep.

The district is not very easy of access, as the railways merely skirt its fringe, and the roads are few and poor. Motor-omnibus services, however, have been instituted, connecting the railways with three or four of the best resorts, and these make it possible to get some notion of the character of the country.

The best centres are Kinlochewe, for Loch Maree and the splendid mountains round its head; Dundonnell for the wild Teallach range, and Lochinver for the strange, isolated peaks of the Sutherland coast and walks along the rocky shores. Accommodation may also be found at the Loch Maree Hotel, at Inchnadamph on Loch Assynt, and at Gairloch, Poolewe and Ullapool, the last three being on the coast, and rather away from the mountains. The first three were the

headquarters from which the walks described in this chapter were made.

There are some advantages in starting a holiday at the end of a spell of bad weather. It is more interesting to have the beauties of a place gradually revealed than to have them burst upon one all at once, and the clearing-up effects after a storm are often the finest of all.

We arrived at Kinlochewe in the rain, with low clouds hiding everything of interest, but, in the morning, these gradually lifted, revealing the whole of the upper half of Beinn Eighe (Ben Eay) gleaming in a mantle of fresh fallen snow, and as the sun reached it before the mists over the valley had dispersed it seemed to hover over the dark foothills like some Himalayan giant (Plate 55). Looking at it under these conditions we began to have considerable misgivings as to our ability ever to reach those lofty ridges.

We spent the next few days exploring Loch Maree and the neighbouring hills, keeping a sharp watch on the big mountain for any route promising access to the ridge without too great difficulty or fatigue.

It is one of the attractions of this part of the world that there are no satisfactory guide-books, and though good maps are obtainable the newcomer has something of the feelings of the explorer. Scotland has so far proved too big a proposition

PLATE 56. Beinn Eighe. (p. 77)

PLATE 57. Beinn Eighe. (p. 77)

for Mr Baddeley, and the methods he has pursued with such success in the English Lakes or North Wales have broken down in dealing with so vast an area. In any case he has been able to describe only the regular tourist routes, and a few main roads, or a few selected peaks. The result is that one has to make out one's own route, choosing the gentlest slopes and avoiding the worst bogs, by the light of nature and experience, without any hints from outside. These conditions naturally lend a sense of adventure, reproducing in a mild form the sensations of the guideless climber, or of the early explorers making first ascents in the Alps.

This statement may of course sound absurd and exaggerated to the regular climber, and I do not wish to compare small things with great, but merely to suggest that this adventurous atmosphere may be sufficiently attained by the middle-aged pedestrian to add a special interest to his ramble, even if it does not involve the difficulties or excitements of the more ambitious enterprise.

Beinn Eighe is composed of seven or eight peaks joined by narrow ridges, the slopes of which are very steep, and composed largely of loose screes. These are very tiresome to walk upon, and, though it might be possible to crawl up almost anywhere, the ridge could be attained only by

such an expenditure of energy that the pleasure of the scramble would be lost in labour and sorrow.

Careful observation, however, showed two weaknesses in the defences of the mountain, one of which is shown in our Plate 55. The little white peak on the left appeared to be attainable by more moderate slopes than the rest of the ridges, and from it the upper part of the mountain could be reached by slopes which were steep in places, but not so long as to be altogether exhausting.

We tried this route a little later on, when the snow had melted to some extent, and found it practicable. The other, and better, way we discovered by accident. We had planned a walk to another and lower hill on the other side of the mountain, which looked as though it should command a good view of the northern precipices. When we reached the col between the two we found ourselves opposite a deep snow-filled corrie, at the head of which was a sloping gully leading right up to the top. We, therefore, dropped our original plan and attacked the bigger objective by this route, finding the deep snow covering all the tiresome, loose stones a great help in the ascent.

Once the ridge was attained it was easy to follow it in either direction, the only care necessary being to avoid treading too near the

PLATE 58. Beinn Eighe—Sgurr Ban. (p. 77)

PLATE 59. Liathach from Beinn Eighe. (p 77)

PLATE 69. Lauthach from Beinn a' Cheurcaith. (p. 83)

PLATE 61. Liathach from Loch Clair. (p. 79)

edge of the snow cornice lining the steeper side of the ridge.

Some of the peaks have fine and striking crags on the north side, which look very impressive when the gullies and slopes below are picked out by the snow (Plate 56).

The character of the mountain with its series of peaks is shown in the photographs (Plates 57 and 58). In Plate 57 the mountain beyond, whose outline from this point faintly suggests the Wetterhorn, is Liathach (3456 feet), one of the most striking peaks in this wild region.

There is not much difference in the height of the Beinn Eighe peaks; that of Sgurr Ban (Plate 58) is given in the ordnance map as 3188 feet, but the higher peak shown beyond, in which all the ridges meet, and which ought to be the real summit of the chain, does not appear to have been officially measured.[1] Actually the highest peak is the Ruadh-stac Mor (3309 feet) which is a spur running north from the main ridge.

There is a grand view of Liathach from our nameless peak (Plate 59), enabling one to get a good impression of the wild and rugged character of this fine mountain. The slopes are everywhere exceedingly steep, and descend in a series of giant steps. Though it might be possible to

[1] *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Guide* suggests a height of about 3220 feet for this peak.

find a zigzag route from terrace to terrace by means of gullies less formidable than the rest, there is, apparently, no easy way to the summit, unless there is a more possible route from the other, or Torridon, end; but this is so far from any habitation that we were unable to try the experiment. Even if the ridge were attained the outline suggests that there might be obstacles, and we felt that, perhaps, after all, we had better leave this mountain to the regular climbers.

It is a pity that one of the grandest mountains in Scotland should be burdened with a name that can be spelt in any number of ways, and which no tongue can pronounce. I have adopted the spelling given in the ordnance map, but as the guide-books call it Liughach it is easy to see that there is considerable doubt as to what it should be, and I have not yet come across anyone bold enough to enlighten me as to the correct pronunciation.

A very good view of the north side of Liathach may be obtained from Beinn a' Chearcaill (2376 feet), easily ascended from Grudie Bridge on Loch Maree. From this point it presents the appearance of a long serrated ridge culminating in a fine peak (Plate 60). The tremendous bluff of the western end is hidden behind Sail Mhor (3217 feet), the end peak of Beinn Eighe, and marked by a striking snow-filled gully dropping

PLATE 62. Liathach from Loch Clair. (p. 79)

PLATE 63. Beinn Eighe from Loch Coulin. (p. 79)

half-way down the mountain in almost a straight line.

Beinn a' Chearcaill itself is a very remarkable hill, the summit being formed of an enormous rock plateau big enough to hold three or four tennis courts, and almost as level were it not for a few cracks and scattered boulders. The broken edge of this extraordinary formation forms the foreground of our picture.

Perhaps the most beautiful view of Laithach is that obtained from Loch Clair (Plate 61), an exquisite little lake with wooded shores just off the road from Kinlochewe to Torridon. The extraordinary western bluff is well shown, and the tent-like summit is a striking object when covered with its spring mantle of snow. It is even more impressive in gloom and storm (Plate 62) with heavy thunder clouds rolling up from the Atlantic and sweeping over the lofty ridges.

From the same little lake there is also a fine view of Beinn Eighe; our picture (Plate 63) is taken from just beyond, beside the channel connecting Loch Clair with another little lake called Loch Coulin. The upper part of Beinn Eighe is formed of white quartzite, and the broken screes look like snow even in summer, when the real snow is not there, to emphasise the effect, as in our springtime photograph.

Though conveniently situated at the cross-

roads Kinlochewe does not command any very striking prospect except for the glimpse of Beinn Eighe shown in Plate 55. It is, however, only a mile or two to the head of Loch Maree, and for the next four miles to Grudie Bridge the road skirts the edge of the lake, and every inch of the way is lovely.

The great feature of this end of the lake is the survival of the old original forest of Scots pine and silver birch, not planted in serried rows like a more modern plantation, but scattered over rock and hill-side in picturesque confusion, allowing room for individual trees to develop their natural grace of outline.

The rocky shores of the lake add greatly to the picture, with little tree-crowned promontories jutting out into the water (Plate 64). The snowy peak in this photograph is Beinn Airidh Charr (2593 feet), some seven or eight miles off down the lake.

From Grudie Bridge, which is surrounded by a fine group of pines, there is a glimpse up a wild valley to the highest peaks of Beinn Eighe (Plate 65), which were looking their best when this photograph was taken, as they glistened in the sunshine with a powdering of fresh fallen snow.

Farther on the road runs a little away from the shore and the foreground is less beautiful, though

PLATE 64. Loch Maree. (p. 80)

PLATE 65. Beinn Eighe from Grudie Bridge. (p. 80)

Slioch (3260 feet), which dominates the whole upper reach of the lake, towers up more grandly than ever over the surrounding hills (Plate 66). When the Loch Maree Hotel is reached the lake widens out and there are a number of islands; this is probably the most visited part of the lake, though, to my mind, the wooded upper reach is the finest part.

Despite its formidable appearance from this side Slioch can be ascended easily from the back. Crossing the river at Kinlochewe the path along the opposite side of the lake leads to the entrance to Glen Bianasdail, a straight narrow cleft between the hills, with a fine tumbling stream, bringing the water down from the upland lake, Lochan Fada.

We started out with the avowed intention of exploring this lake, but when we reached the top of the pass it looked as though we should have to go a long way to get a different view, and big streams without bridges might provide unexpected obstacles. On the other hand the slope above looked inviting and tempted us upward. A short scramble led us up to a ridge which ran almost directly to the summit, giving a much easier route than we had expected.

There was a great deal of snow about, picking out the gullies, and giving the ridges quite an Alpine appearance. Though the weather was fine on the whole there was a curious sort of

gloom in the distance, and a slight haze, which did not, however, hide the snowy tops of the mountains looming through it like ghosts. Plates 67 and 68 give two views from the top, one (67) looking across Lochan Fada towards the splendid Teallach range in the distance, and the other (68) looking down on Loch Maree and its islands fading away into the mist.

The whole country between Slioch and An Teallach looks interesting, with its series of wild mountains and lakes, but the absence of paths and bridges, and the distance from any inhabited spot, render it very difficult to explore.

The ascent of Slioch just described is a good example of the right way to start for a walk in the Highlands. It is a mistake to take things too seriously, or to have too definite a plan in such an uncertain climate as that of the west coast. To be ready to seize an opportunity, or to vary one's objective according to the weather, is one of the secrets of a successful holiday.

I can never understand why all writers of books about the Highlands seem to choose the worst possible weather for their climbs. They invariably seem to get half lost in clouds ; to be driven to attempt the most difficult and exhausting routes, and to see nothing when they get there. I suppose there is some pleasure to the man overflowing with animal strength and vigour

Plate 66. Slioch from Loch Maree. (p. 81)

VIEWS FROM SLIOCH

PLATE 67. Towards An Teallach.

PLATE 68. Towards Loch Maree. (p. 82)

in matching his powers against the rage of the elements ; in fighting his way up rock face and ridge against roaring gale and driving rain, but I must confess that I like to see something when I have dragged myself up a steep slope, and as one gets older there is more need for economy of effort if one is to make the best of a mountain holiday. It is, of course, impossible to avoid being caught by a sudden change of weather now and then, but it is foolish to start off for the mountain tops under obviously hopeless conditions, and one should have the strength of mind to turn back when the weather looks like breaking up.

If I were asked to name the wildest and grandest mountain on the mainland of Scotland I should give the palm to An Teallach (The Challich). It can be visited from Dundonnell, where there is a comfortable little inn, but it is best to go early in the year as it is all deer forest, and strictly preserved in the season.

Dundonnell is reached from Garve station on the Highland Railway, whence a motor-omnibus runs to Ullapool, thirty-four miles distant. It is necessary to arrange for a trap to meet the omnibus about nineteen or twenty miles from Garve, where the road branches off from the Ullapool route, the distance from here being about fifteen miles.

Dundonnell is thus somewhat cut off from the world, but is well worth an even more tiresome journey. The greater part of the drive is over comparatively dull moorland, over 1000 feet above the sea at the highest level, and only becomes really interesting when the descent to the Dundonnell valley begins. The last few miles are very pretty, with wooded slopes and rich pastures at the bottom, reminding one of the English Lakes more than is usual in Scotland.

A little below the road there is an extraordinary gorge, a narrow chasm some hundred feet deep, with the river rushing along at the bottom, and so narrow that a good jumper could almost clear it at a bound. It is half hidden in deep heather, and would be a dangerous trap to come across suddenly in the dark.

The inn is situated at the head of Little Loch Broom, a noble sheet of water walled in by steep hills. Though it cannot be classed as one of the finest of the sea lochs it has some good features, and, as it runs in a north-westerly direction, it looks best in the late afternoon when the sun is partially hidden by thick clouds, and is sending long rays through these, lighting up the water with a track of gold (Plate 69).

An Teallach itself is not seen well from the loch, as it is hidden by its lesser satellites. The chief feature is Sail Mhor (2508 feet), a spur of

PLATE 69. Little Loch Broom. (p. 84)

PLATE 70. An Teallach—Sgurr Fiona. (p. 86)

the greater chain standing rather apart from the rest, with the top powdered with fresh snow as shown in our picture.

We made this hill the object of our first expedition, as it seemed the right spot for a bird's-eye view of the district from which to reconnoitre the Teallach on its northern and least precipitous side in the hope of finding a reasonable way up. There was an icy gale blowing on the top which spoilt some of the pleasure of the walk, but we had a glimpse down to Loch-na-Sheallag on the farther side, a little lake hemmed in by rugged mountains, which would be well worth a visit if it could be reached from any direction without an undue expenditure of energy.

We were also able to plan a method of attack on the highest peak of An Teallach, which we carried out successfully a day or two later. There is a flat-topped spur, a little over 2000 feet high, running north from the main peak, which can be attained by a fairly steep scramble from the loch. From this it is easy to reach the higher ridge from which the final peak rises. The last ascent is steep and laborious for anyone not in good training, but the view from the top is an ample reward for the effort involved.

The ground-plan of the mountain is roughly in the shape of the letter **E**, of which the top stroke is the end of the ridge by which we ascended.

The summit, Bidein a' Ghlas Thuill (3483 feet), is just where the centre stroke reaches the upright one at the back, while the second peak, Sgurr Fiona (3474 feet), with its attendant pinnacles, forms the lower part of the upright stroke, and a fine craggy spur called Sail Liath forms the bottom of the letter.

At the back of An Teallach the slopes consist of exceedingly steep screes, but towards the inside of the E there are tremendous precipices of bare rock. Plate 70 shows the crags of Sgurr Fiona from the highest summit.

We managed to scramble along the ridge to the sharp peak on the right of the picture, which is actually the highest part of Sgurr Fiona, but time would not allow of an attempt upon the rest of the ridge to see whether a way could be found round the very formidable set of pinnacles beyond without involving anything in the way of serious rock-climbing. No finer mountain outline can be found in Scotland, outside the Cuillin Hills of Skye, than that presented here.

In order to explore the south-eastern, and finest, face of the mountain, with its precipices and deep corries, the road up the glen should be taken for about three miles from the hotel, till a track comes in from the south just beyond a tributary stream. This track should be followed for about a mile, when the stream should be

PLATE 71. An Teallach—Sgurr Fiona. (pp. 88, 89)

PLATE 72. An Teallach—Sgurr Fiona. (p. 89)

crossed at the most favourable spot, and the ridge opposite mounted. This ridge is a very remarkable geological phenomenon: it runs in a straight line for about two and a half miles, rising from the bottom of the valley to a height of 1400 or 1500 feet at the upper end. About a quarter of the way up it is split right through by a fault which provides a formidable obstacle to anyone desiring to follow the ridge. It should therefore be attacked from beyond this point. The ridge slopes up gently on the outside, but towards the mountain is broken off in a precipice, or descends in great steps to the hollow in which the stream flows, like a vast Greek theatre—an impression which is accentuated by the way in which it curves round at the top towards the mountain, and by the pure white colour of the rock of which it is composed. It is hard and slippery and the surface is mostly bare, with huge smooth slabs of shining rock, and pools of clear water in the hollows, which leave only room for little patches of heather in the cracks, especially near the edge. The whole forms a wonderful platform from which to watch the crags and pinnacles of An Teallach, especially in stormy weather when the clouds roll over the crags in cascades of mist, and peak and pinnacle appear now together, now alone, picked out from the encircling gloom in an ever-changing succession

of noble pictures, and looking twice their real size in the uncertain light.

Our illustration (Plate 71) gives some notion of the broad white slabs of the "Marble Ridge," as we christened it from our fancied comparison to the tiers of a Greek theatre.

I do not know what the rock really is, but an account of this district by a competent geologist[1] would be interesting and instructive. The great mass of the mountain seems to be composed of Torridon sandstone and gritstone, capped probably by patches of quartzite or other hard rock, like other hills in Ross, which have preserved the base beneath them from erosion and caused the towers and spires that give this mountain its unique character.

The hard Torridon sandstone is of a dark reddish colour, and seems to lie in a series of superimposed beds; these, when broken away sharply at the edges, form a series of parallel terraces or ledges which are picked out by the snow in the photograph.

Much the same formation occurs on Liathach, which we were examining a few pages back, and there the hard quartzite caps forming the peaks

[1] The introductory volume of *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Guide-Book*, which has now been published, contains a brief and rather technical description of the geology of the Highlands, but details of any particular district could not be included in the space available.

PLATE 73. View from Sail Liath (An Teallach). (p. 89)

PLATE 74. Coast near Ullapool. (p. 91)

PLATE 75. Loch Lurgainn and Stac Polly. (p. 91)

PLATE 76. Loch Lurgainn. (p. 92)

are clearly to be seen in summer photographs when their lighter colour is not disguised by snow.

Right under the crags of Sgurr Fiona, in the hollow, is a little lakelet, almost surrounded by towering cliffs, with the bare rock dipping straight into the dark water. It is a striking scene, but it is difficult to do it justice in a photograph, for, in order to do so, it would be necessary to use such a wide-angled lens to include the tops of the crags that it would dwarf their apparent height.

The fine precipices on our left in the picture (Plate 71) are part of Sail Liath, the southernmost spur of the mountain, forming the bottom stroke of the letter E. This can be climbed without difficulty from the end, though the slope is steep and fatiguing in places. But it is well worth the effort, as it commands a very fine view of Sgurr Fiona and the pinnacles from a fresh angle (Plate 72), and a most extensive panorama to the south and west.

The view up the long valley at our feet, with the river winding at the bottom, walled in by ridge behind ridge of wild mountains, was especially impressive (Plate 73). The prospect was closed in the distance by Beinn Eighe's long chain of peaks, and, a little nearer to the left, by our old friend Slioch, whose steep northern bluff is unmistakable.

Dundonnell seems very far from the rest of the world. The post comes via Ullapool, itself thirty-four miles by motor-omnibus from the railway; it has then to be ferried across Loch Broom, about three-quarters of a mile by boat, and thence it has to be carried on foot, or in a light cart, by a very steep and rough road for another six or seven miles over the mountains to Dundonnell.

After a pleasant stay at Dundonnell we decided to move our base of operations northwards, and explore the remarkable country on the borders of Ross and Sutherland.

The first stage was to reach Ullapool, where we spent the night, after an interesting afternoon examining the beauties of Loch Broom. It is a long inlet with a distant view at the head of the Fannich Mountains, whose fine outlines close the vista very satisfactorily. The east shore is clothed in dense plantations of fir-trees of many different kinds, giving it a softer look than is often found in this wild and desolate country, but the trees are so thick in places that, for miles on end, it is difficult to get a glimpse of the view from the road.

It is a great contrast with the scene a few miles north of Ullapool, where there is a typical bit of west coast scenery just beyond the entrance to Loch Broom. Steep and rocky hills, clad in

PLATE 77. Cul Mor from Loch Sionascaig. (p. 93)

PLATE 78. Loch Assynt and Quinag. (p. 93)

heather, dip into the sea, or send out long spits of sand or rock to divide one inlet from the next (Plate 74). Beyond the flat spit, with one or two lonely houses on it, is a rocky promontory, on the farther side of which is the entrance to Loch Broom, and beyond again, with its top wreathed in clouds, as in our picture, is Beinn Ghobhlach (2082 feet), the highest peak on the tongue of land separating Loch Broom from Little Loch Broom.

Next morning we hired a car, intending to reach Inchnadamph on Loch Assynt, about twenty-four miles off by road, breaking the journey by a little detour to visit Loch Lurgainn.

This is the first of the extraordinary series of lakes which are dotted all over the western part of Sutherland, and in such numbers that the map seems to show almost as much water as land. Loch Lurgainn is rather a desolate sheet of water of irregular outline, but is surrounded by some of the most striking mountain shapes in Scotland. Ben More Coigach, no longer a long straight ridge of rock stretching out into the sea, as viewed from the Ullapool neighbourhood, is here seen in profile, supported by a cluster of sharp-peaked satellites. On the other side are Stac Polly and Cul Beag, the first of the extraordinary row of isolated peaks that give a special character to the scenery of this district. Stac Polly (Plate 75),

though only two thousand feet in height, is a particularly striking example of these. It rises steeply on all sides from quite low ground, and is crowned by a great comb of rocks, which gives it a distinctive outline from all sides.

With a little judicious planting to soften the austerity of the scene this lake could be made one of the chief beauties of Scotland, for in few other places could such a striking and varied mountain outline be found as a background to any lake. If an unpretentious inn could be established on its shores, and reasonable access obtained to the neighbouring deer forests, there is no question that it would make a splendid holiday centre.

Good walks could be found in every direction; interesting mountains with fine views could be climbed, and the rocky seacoast of Enard Bay is within easy reach. The numerous lochs and streams would be a paradise for fishermen, and Stac Polly, and probably also Cul Beag and Cul Mor, would provide entertainment for the rock-climber without too great an expenditure of energy in getting to the foot of his objectives.

Viewed from the heights at the farther, or western, end this lake forms the centre of an amphitheatre of hills presenting as varied and wild an outline as any in Scotland (Plate 76). Stac Polly, with its comb of rock, is easily identified on

PLATE 79. Kylesku—"Thunder Locally." (p. 94)

PLATE 80. The Aiguilles of Suilven. (p. 94)

PLATE 81. Suilven from Canisp. (p. 94)

PLATE 82. Quinag from Canisp. (p. 95)

the left, Cul Beag is on the extreme right, and Cul Mor fills up the gap in the middle very satisfactorily.

Not far off there is a larger lake of irregular shape, with wooded islands, rocky headlands and secluded bays. It is called Loch Sionascaig in the ordnance map, but Baddeley prefers the cacophonous version of Loch Skenaskink. Stac Polly, Cul Beag (2523 feet), Cul Mor (2786 feet), and the more distant Suilven (2399 feet), each rising in isolated grandeur from the undulating heathery country round the lake, form a magnificent background.

Plate 77 shows Cul Mor from the north-western end of the lake, which is the least inaccessible part of it; but it would take a long time to exhaust the charms of the winding shores of this lake, especially in its present deserted condition, for it is without paths or bridges, and some distance from any road.

Loch Assynt is the largest fresh-water lake in this district, being seven or eight miles long, and can be best explored from Inchnadamph. Ben More Assynt (3273 feet) and its spurs command the head of the lake, but the chief feature is the long irregular cliff of Quinag, with its series of peaks of from about 2500 to 2600 feet in height, well seen from the lower end (Plate 78).

A rough road strikes off a little beyond Inchna-

damph, and, passing under the cliffs of Quinag, leads to Kylesku. This is a very beautiful spot at the junction of three sea lochs ; it possesses a minute inn and a ferry, when one can find the ferryman. It would make an ideal centre for anyone fond of boating, as the scenery is fine and varied, but communications by land are difficult. This type of country is most impressive on an unsettled day, when hail and thunder showers are sweeping across the hills at the head of the lochs, while an occasional gleam of sunshine helps to emphasise the blackness of the storm (Plate 79).

The most interesting ascent from Inchnadamph is that of Canisp as the proximity to the aiguilles of its neighbour Suilven gives it a character all its own. After a spell of bad weather, during which snow fell even down to the valley, it suddenly cleared up, and we decided to attack our mountain by its southern ridge as we wanted to get Suilven more end on, while the snow was picking out the gullies (Plate 80). The tramp through the bogs and lower slopes was rather sloppy in the fast-melting snow, but going was better when we reached the higher ground. The view from the top is very extensive, with the sea glittering behind Suilven (Plate 81), and the brilliant sunshine on the fresh fallen snow seemed to fill the whole landscape with light and colour.

PLATE 83. Coast near Lochinver. (p. 95)

Plate 84. Coast near Lochinver. (p. 95)

To the north the snow-capped domes and ridges of Quinag rose grandly over Loch Assynt (Plate 82).

Lochinver is situated on the coast, about four or five miles from the foot of Loch Assynt. The hotel was originally built as a residence for the Duke of Sutherland, and possesses spacious halls and imposing staircases, with the result that its charges are higher than those of most of the less palatial establishments referred to in these pages. However, it is well placed for exploring the fine coast, and is a possible, though rather distant, base for an attack on Suilven.

The low cliffs to the northward afford a good view of the strange series of isolated mountains already referred to (Plate 83), which, instead of being arranged in a connected chain, as almost everywhere else, seem to have been dropped down separately like specimens in a museum. Beginning on the left in our illustration we have Suilven, the most remarkable of them all, then Cul Mor, Cul Beag and Stac Polly; Canisp and Quinag continue the series outside the picture on the left.

The coast to the south of Lochinver is very rocky, reminding one in places of Cornwall, were it not for the mountain background which gives an interest to the hinterland, which is lacking in its south-coast rival (Plate 84). The background in our picture is formed by Stac Polly and the long ridge of Ben More Coigach.

The feature of all this neighbourhood is the extraordinary outline of Suilven—or the Sugar-loaf, as it is vulgarly called, owing to its appearance when seen end on. It is always popping up, like an enormous thimble, in unexpected places (Plate 85). From the side it is a double peak, shaped something like a dolphin, with a great rounded head, and a sharp pointed tail beyond a depression in the middle. From beyond the tail the mountain looks like a regular aiguille, if we may use an Alpine term. It is inaccessible all round to any but expert climbers in good training, except just in the middle, on either side of the saddle separating the two peaks. Here there is a steep grassy gully up which it is just possible for the ordinary mortal to crawl, though not without some puffing and blowing. But once the ridge is gained the way to the higher summit is easy.

The view is chiefly remarkable for the vast number of lochs dotted all over the country below. These are of all shapes and sizes, and can be counted literally by the hundred. Truly Sutherland should be a paradise for the fisherman !

Those who wish to combine a sea and mountain holiday might do much worse than settle down at Achiltibuie on the coast between Lochinver and Ullapool. It is not likely to be a crowded or fashionable resort as it is some fifty-six miles

PLATE 85. Suilven from Loch Bad na Muirichinn. (p. 96)

PLATE 87. Achiltibuie—"West Coast Weather." (p. 98)

from a railway station, thirty-four of which may be covered by motor-omnibus to Ullapool. Beyond this the road skirts the beautiful chain of lakes beginning with Loch Lurgainn, described above, and then bends round to the coast. On first arrival we were a little disappointed as the haze hid the beautiful view across the bay, and the immediate surroundings of the little inn, consisting mainly of forlorn-looking potato-fields and crofters' cottages were not inspiring. Further exploration, however, completely altered our impression. Directly we had crossed the potato-fields we came to a delightful little promontory with a fine rocky coast and splendid views across the sea as soon as the weather cleared. These may be still further improved by climbing Ben More Coigach (2438 feet), which is so placed as to combine most of the conditions required for an ideal view-point. Situated just at a corner where the coast bends round at right angles, Ben More commands a wide stretch of sea dotted with islands, while to the west a series of long promontories jut out, separated by narrow inlets. On the land side these culminate in the grand Teallach Range, whose snow-covered tops are seen in our illustration (Plate 86) across a wide arm of the sea whose surface is dappled with cloud-shadows. To the south is Loch Broom, backed by the Fannich peaks, and a tangled mass of hills fading away into the distance, while to

the east the crags of Ben More itself drop steeply towards the Lurgainn group of lakes with Stack Polly and the other shapely peaks around them.

The rocky coast opposite the Summer Isles is an excellent hunting-ground for the photographer of weather effects. Plate 87 was taken near here on a stormy day in an interval between the showers, and attempts to give some suggestion of the wild weather of these western coasts. Plate 88 was secured under calmer conditions with the sun sinking to rest behind the islands.

The continuation to the north-west of the Coigach peninsula is dull inland, but along the coasts, especially along the side overlooking Enard Bay, there is cliff scenery which would do credit to the best bits of the Cornish coast. Little sandy bays, jagged rocks and imposing cliffs keep up the interest all the way, while the strange outlines of Suilven and the Sutherland hills rising across the bay add a touch of mountain grandeur which can only be found on these western shores (Plate 89).

PLATE 89. Enard Bay Cliffs. (p. 98)

PLATE 90. Sound of Raasay from Portree Cliffs. (p. 102)

CHAPTER IV

THE ISLE OF SKYE

Skye is nowadays the Mecca of the climbing fraternity, and, though for years I had wondered what it was like, I had a notion that it was hardly the place for an ordinary humdrum pedestrian like myself, and that if I went there I should not be able to penetrate into the recesses of the mountains, but should have to contemplate them from afar, and with as much respect as one would the mighty Alpine or Himalayan peaks. Most of the photographs, too, that I had seen gave such a notion of bare rock and utter desolation that they seemed almost repellent. It was indeed only when I had actually visited the Cuillin that I found these ideas to be far from the truth.

It is a fact that these hills differ from almost all others in Britain—except perhaps one or two in Ross—in that there is rarely an easy way to the top. In most places there is usually a back way up to be found, but here the peaks often have no back, and, in consequence, many of them can only be reached by trained climbers armed with ropes and other adjuncts of the craft.

There are, however, various routes across the chain, and a number of summits which are no more than a rough scramble. These are quite sufficient to enable an ordinary hill rambler to obtain a very fair notion of what these mountains are like. The bare rock, too, is there, and here and there—in places like Coire na Creiche—the masses of loose stones and unrelieved ferocity of the rocks are apt to be depressing, but usually the majesty of the rock towers gives a certain grandeur to the landscape, and the bald effect is relieved by patches of heather.

Above all, the proximity to the ocean is an everlasting joy, and the great stretches of sea visible from almost every point of vantage add the colour needed to set off the blackness of the gabbro of which the Cuillin Hills are built. A little snow, too, helps to clothe the nakedness of these crags, and I have been fortunate in making my visits in the early spring, when there was a plentiful supply of this most useful aid to mountain photography.

Skye can be reached by the ferry from Kyle, and though Kyle Akin on the other side is a pretty spot, and the hills above the village are well worth a visit, this is too far from the centre of things for a long stay. The steamer calls at Broadford, which is convenient for the Red Hills, and there is a road to Loch Slapin at the foot of

Blaven, but that on to Sligachan is so bad that most people continue the voyage to Portree, whence a good road leads to that famous resort.

Those who have time should spend a few days at Portree, for there are many other things in Skye deserving of a visit besides the Cuillin, and Portree is probably the best centre to work from.

At Easter-time in 1921 we approached Skye under wild wintry conditions. A gale from the north, which alone can stir up these protected waters, lashed the usually calm sound into a miniature English Channel, prevented our calling at Broadford, and made the little *Shiela*, with her sea-sick passengers and her limited accommodation, anything but a comfortable means of transport. To add to our discomfort a cargo of 500 sheep had been taken aboard and occupied all the spare space on the ship, including the first-class cabin; to which troubles were added sharp snowstorms at intervals, one of them so dense that the boat missed the entrance to Portree harbour altogether, and when the squall had passed had to turn round and retrace its course.

There was a heavy fall of snow in the night and next morning everything was white down to the water's edge, making our proposed expedition up the Storr quite out of the question.

We were able, however, to walk along the cliffs overlooking the entrance to the harbour, and these

looked very fine in their white garb (Plate 90). Though the outlines of the more distant hills were obscured by cloud, the view across the Sound of Raasay, backed by great snow-clouds, was most beautiful. The striking headland in our picture, beyond the harbour entrance on the right, is Ben Tianavaig (1362 feet) and deserves an expedition to itself as it possesses some extraordinary rock scenery, and, on a clear day, should command a particularly beautiful view. The cliff walk may be continued indefinitely, and there are fine views of the mainland all the way.

Recently a new road has been made between the mountains and the coast which enables the sights of the northern part of the island to be visited by motor-car.

The northern part of the island has a curious backbone of mountain starting north of Portree and running more or less parallel to the coast almost to the end. In places it exceeds 2000 feet in height, and slopes gradually up from the west, but breaks away in a tremendous escarpment on the east. Except for a few slight depressions there is an almost continuous line of crags for fifteen miles, and in one or two places there are really imposing precipices.

The highest point of the range is the Storr (2360 feet), and here, in addition to the tremendous main cliffs, there are some extraordinary rock

PLATE 91. The Storr. (p. 103)

PLATE 92. The Old Man of Storr.
PLATE 93. Quiraing. (p. 103)

formations (Plate 91). The best known of these is the strange obelisk known as the Old Man of Storr (Plate 92), which is a landmark from the sea for many miles around. It stands on a pyramidal base of debris, amid a weird collection of rock pinnacles, and is said to be about 160 feet high.

Farther north, almost at the end of the range, is an even more extraordinary collection of rocks known as the Quiraing (Plate 93). Here a group of huge towers enclose a narrow space at the foot of the cliff, with a flat-topped mass in the middle, known as the Table. It is approached by a narrow and steep path from below, and forms a sort of natural castle. Indeed it seems to have been used as a safe retreat in the bad old days. It is difficult to get a satisfactory photograph of it as the rocks are too close together, but our illustration (Plate 93), taken from the edge of the slope leading to the top of the mountain, shows the outer pylons guarding the entrance to this strange sanctuary. This photograph was taken on a hot summer day, in extraordinary contrast to the wintry conditions under which we had landed three weeks earlier. A sea mist hung low over the water, through which the islands poked their heads in a strange manner. From all this range of hills there are magnificent views of the distant mainland peaks across the sound.

In many parts of Skye there is fine coast scenery which can be seen by the help of a motor from Portree or Dunvegan. To mention only a few: in Staffin Bay, near the Quiraing, there are fluted basaltic cliffs of the same type as the more famous examples at Staffa. Near Dunvegan, on the west coast, and farther south at Talisker, there are cliffs a thousand feet high dropping almost sheer into the sea. But it is difficult to see and describe all these scattered beauties in a short holiday, so we must follow the usual course and make our way to the famous hotel at Sligachan, beloved of climbers, which is the only hostelry from which the Cuillin can be visited.

This hotel stands at the entrance to Glen Sligachan, a long and dreary valley full of bog, and shut in between the Red Hills on one side and the Black Cuillin on the other. About halfway along this valley there is a fine glimpse into Harta Corrie, and the latter part, along a little lake and under the towering crags of Blaven, is fine, but the rough and boggy track for the first three or four miles is a weariness to the flesh, especially as it has often to be traversed both on the outward and the return journey.

A very pleasant and easy expedition from Sligachan is to follow the inviting-looking ridge leading up to the Red Hills forming part of Lord Macdonald's Forest. Glamaig (2537 feet), the

PLATE 94. View from Red Hills. (p. 105)

highest of these hills, is too steep to be attractive, but the next hill to it is easily attained, and commands splendid views both of the Cuillin opposite and of the sea channels and mainland on the other side. We spent a most enjoyable Sunday here, in fine weather, with glorious clouds and a blue distance—a succession of lazy hours basking in the sunshine and drinking in the beauty of the landscape seen through that magic atmosphere (Plate 95).

The Red Hills are formed of a crumbly kind of pink granite. The lower slopes are usually covered with heather, but the tops are bare and bald, and as the watercourses are also stony and bare the hills sometimes look as though someone had emptied a vast pot of red paint over them, which had run down the sides in streaks.

These Red Hills are usually separate from one another, have very steep sides, and tend to copy one another in shape, having a large rounded head and a sharper little tail running out behind. The outlines from the distance are bold and striking, but there are practically no crags, and the only difficulty of ascending any of them lies in the steepness of the loose scree.

Very different are the jagged ridges of the Black Cuillin, standing on the other side of Glen Sligachan. These are the mountains people come to Skye to see, and there is nothing else in our

islands to compare with them. They are formed of hard black volcanic gabbro—an ideal rock for climbing, as it is firm and rough, affording a foothold in places which would be absolutely impossible on a softer or more friable rock.

In places there are large slabs of smooth, slippery surface which have caused more than one fatal accident to wanderers who have lost their way, and not infrequently great curved blocks occur like the back of a huge sea monster. The bigger summits are all very much of the same size, but great variety is given by the extraordinary outlines and strange sky-line.

The best known, and in some ways the finest, peak is Sgurr nan Gillean (3167 feet). It stands just at the corner of the range over Sligachan, and in shape is almost the ideal of what a mountain should be. It has a sharp peak supported by a number of jagged pinnacles, and is inaccessible to all but practised climbers on every side save one. From the farther end of Glen Sligachan it presents an outline that reminds one of Lichfield Cathedral with its lofty central and twin western towers.

The only route to the top for non-climbers is found by crossing the bog behind the hotel and making for the ridge to the south of the summit. Once this is reached the hard work is done, and it is a pleasant scramble to the top.

PLATE 96. Sgurr nan Gillean. (p. 109)

In clear weather there is no difficulty, but in bad weather, with a strong wind, or ice on the rocks, care is necessary in one or two narrow places where a slip might have serious consequences. It is perhaps wiser for those who are unused to mountains to be accompanied by John McKenzie, the only real guide that Scotland has so far produced, or by someone who has been up before, as it would be easy to get into difficulties were the narrow way missed.

On the day of my visit I was favoured with wonderful weather. The sky was unclouded, and the atmosphere so clear that we could see the Outer Hebrides in one direction and Ben Nevis in the other, while islands like Rum and Eigg, twenty miles away, were seen with clear reflections in the calm, glassy waters of the Atlantic. It was so still that a match burned steadily without shelter, and we sat for an hour or more on the narrow summit, where there is just room for five or six people to repose in comfort, gazing at the scene around us, under conditions rarely met with in the fickle climate of the west.

Though the view is more extensive from the top it is more satisfactory, from the photographic standpoint, from the ridge at the base of the final cone. There is more room there to move about, and to select the foregrounds necessary to the making of a good picture. Our illustra-

tion (Plate 94) was taken from this lower elevation, and gives the view looking across the lower end of Glen Sligachan towards the western face of Blaven (3042 feet), the great outlying peak of the black gabbro which stands in isolated grandeur facing the Red Hills. The sharp peak in the middle is Garbh-Bheinn (2649 feet), and between the two is the rugged outline of Clach Glas, the traverse of which is considered a tit-bit for first-class cragsmen. In the middle distance one of the red hills has strayed among the blacks, and in the background are the hills of the mainland, and a glimpse of the entrance to Loch Hourn, commanded by the sentinel peak of Ben Sgriol just to the right of Garbh-Bheinn.

By far the best view of Sgurr nan Gillean is obtained from the ridge leading to Sgurr a' Bhasteir, the lower peak jutting out to the right of the big mountain, as seen from Sligachan. It is easily reached from the corries on either side, and may be combined with the ascent of Bruach na Frithe (3143 feet) by working round the extraordinary rock towers known as Am Basteir, or the Executioner, and the Bhasteir Tooth (which should surely be called the Axe).

From this point the sharp summit of Sgurr nan Gillean towers up magnificently above the supporting pinnacles, and when the gullies are filled with snow, as is often the case on these northern slopes

PLATE 98. Loch Coruisk from Bealach na Glaic Moire. (p. 111)

quite late into the season, it is difficult to believe that this is a Scottish hill-top and not some mighty Alpine peak (Plate 96).

It is fortunate for the non-climber that the finest view in the whole range is that from Bruach na Frithe, which is the most accessible of all the bigger peaks. It is easily reached from Sligachan, either by following the ridge all the way up from the pass leading to Glen Brittle, or, better still, by going straight up from the corrie between it and Sgurr a' Bhasteir (Fionn Choire). There are no difficulties beyond the steepness and the vast quantities of loose stones which cannot be avoided anywhere in the Cuillin.

What gives this view its special effectiveness is the way the main ridge twists round, giving the appearance of three ridges, one in front of the other. Each is crowned with a series of rock towers of which the most important is Bidein Druim nan Ramh (2900 feet), the Matterhorn of the district.

When our photograph (Plate 97) was taken there was a slight haze which helped to pick out the separate ridges, and made the big mountains in the distance look farther off, and consequently higher. The three main peaks in our picture are Sgurr Dearg (3254 feet) on the right, Sgurr Alasdair (3309 feet) in the middle, and Sgurr Dubh (3089 feet) on our left. I give the Ordnance Survey

heights, though an article in *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* for 1923 shows good reason for doubting the accuracy of some of them.[1]

Some years ago the above-mentioned club published a large-scale map of these hills, a copy of which is hanging up in the hotel at Sligachan. In it are marked the various routes and passes; these are drawn in different colours, and graded according to their difficulty or importance. Those who intend to explore the innermost recesses of the hills should study this map carefully before starting, and, in doubtful weather, should take pains to note the way they have come, as weather-changes in these parts are very sudden, particularly as there may be only one way down that will not land the inexperienced wanderer in difficulties.

After studying the map we found a route, marked as reasonable, over the pass between Bidein and Sgurr a' Mhadaidh, called the Bealach na Glaic Moire, which would enable us to obtain some notion of the hills beyond the middle ridge seen from Bruach na Frithe (Plate 97).

It is some distance from Sligachan to the bottom of the pass in Coire na Creiche, at the head

[1] The corrected heights given in the Guide are Sgurr Dearg 3206 feet, Sgurr Alasdair 3251 feet, Bidein Druim nan Ramh 2850 feet.

PLATE 100. Loch Scavaig. (p. 112)

PLATE 101. Loch Scavaig. (p. 113)

of which is a great rocky buttress dividing the corrie into two parts. The right-hand one of these, called Tairneilear, has to be climbed, and from this a steep gully, full of huge rocks and snow, leads to the top of the pass. The scramble up the long gully is very tiring, but when this has been negotiated a short detour to the right leads to the ridge, which can be traversed for some little distance in either direction.

The view from this ridge is very striking (Plate 98), for one can look down into the desolate, rock-girt hollow in which lies the famous Loch Coruisk. The hill commanding the farther end of the lake is Sgurr na Stri (1623 feet), a splendid viewpoint, and beyond is the sea, with one long promontory after another jutting out into it.

It is also possible to ascend Sgurr na Banachdich (3167 feet) from Sligachan, but it is such a long walk round the base of all the buttresses of this irregular chain of mountains that it is better tackled from Glen Brittle, if accommodation can be got there.

The great expedition from Sligachan is to traverse the whole length of the Glen to Camasunary (Camas Fhionnairidh), a delightful little bay between Sgurr na Stri and Blaven (which, by the way, would make an ideal site for an hotel), and then to follow the coast round Sgurr na Stri, with its glorious views over Loch Scavaig, past

the notorious "Bad Step," which can easily be avoided by clambering a little up the hill-side, and so on to Loch Coruisk, and back over the Druim Hain ridge to Glen Sligachan.

This means a long round of over twenty miles, and visitors sometimes content themselves with the walk to Coruisk and back by the same path over the ridge, but by so doing they miss the most beautiful part of all.

The day we had for our walk by Loch Scavaig was most satisfactory. There was bright sunshine over the sea, whilst some heavy clouds hung over the western chain of hills, and over Coruisk, giving that sense of gloom which is so appropriate to that wild lake.

Scavaig was looking extraordinarily beautiful in the sunshine. The clear sea-water danced and sparkled among the rocks, while Gars-Bheinn (2934 feet), the end peak of the Cuillin range, loomed dark and stern across the loch, with an angry cloud rolling over its summit (Plate 99).

About half-way along the shelf on which the path runs there projects a little headland which commands what I feel I may claim to be the grandest view in Britain (Plate 100). All around steep bare precipices descend into the sea, and through a gap in them a glimpse is seen of the fresh-water Loch Coruisk with its girdle of black cliffs, backed by the jagged peaks of the Cuillin.

PLATE 102. Loch Coruisk. (p. 114)

The highest points are obscured by clouds in our picture, but the Bidein in the centre is almost clear, and the sharp peak of Sgurr nan Gillean and the weird outline of the Executioner are peeping over the middle ridge.

The sombre effect of all this bare rock is tempered by the wonderful colour of the sea, clear as crystal on this rocky shore, and toned to a pale green under the lee of the little island in the centre. There is, too, a certain amount of vegetation even here; every crack and cranny is filled with heather, and down on our shelf by the water, where the diminished steepness allows a little earth to accumulate, there is a veritable rock garden (Plate 101). These photographs were taken in May, and here, among the stones, was a profusion of ferns and wild flowers, primroses, bluebells, violets, and orchids, which made the wilderness blossom as the rose, and served as an admirable foil to the savage mountains beyond.

Crossing the narrow spit of land that separates the two lochs the walker finds himself in even sterner and more savage surroundings. Though Scott's poetic description may be somewhat exaggerated, and patches of heather, and even an occasional wild flower, may be found in the crannies of the rocks, Coruisk is certainly the wildest of our British lakes, and the prevailing

impression it leaves behind is one of naked crags, black water and piles of stones (Plate 102).

Coruisk should be seen on a dull day, with heavy clouds about, if it is to appear in its most impressive mood, but the clouds should not be too low as the mountain outline is worth having in the picture. The head of the lake is dominated by Sgurr a' Ghreadaidh, supported on either side by Sgurr a' Mhadaidh and Sgurr na Banachdich. Nearer at hand Sgurr Dubh towers up above the inky water (Plate 104), its shape curiously repeated by a series of lesser heights in front.

Sgurr-na-Stri (1623 feet) may be climbed without difficulty by following the ridge from the place where the Sligachan-Coruisk path crosses it. The detour is well worth making as this little mountain has a fine rocky summit, with steep crags sloping down into the sea. It is so situated as to command an almost complete view of the range with all its famous peaks grouped round the deep-set hollow in which Coruisk reposes (Plate 103). This belvédère can also be ascended direct from Camasunary by an obvious gully leading up to the ridge where it joins the other route to the top, but the stream at the bottom may have to be waded, as there is no bridge, and in Springtime the water can be cold!

The best centre from which to explore the

PLATE 104. Loch Coruisk. (p. 114)

PLATE 105. Sgurr Alasdair from Loch Brittle. (p. 116)

farther side of the Cuillin is Glen Brittle, and, as it was not the regular holiday season, we were fortunate in finding comfortable quarters in a cottage by the sea. This limited accommodation is much sought after, and therefore needs no advertisement, so that I refrain from publishing the name of our capable and obliging hostess.

As we purposed a stay of a fortnight or more we had to study the problem of transport, luggage being difficult to convey to this remote spot. Mine host at the Portree hotel hesitated to risk his own car on the mountain road from Carbost, but succeeded in finding an old Ford which accomplished the journey for us without serious mishap. From the end of the road we had to carry our bags slung on walking-sticks for another half-mile to our cottage, mostly through bog, as the bridge had recently been washed away and re-erected farther up, without any regular approach to it from either side.

It was a most uncomfortable drive in bitter wind and driving snow, but we were fortunate in arriving when we did as we had an opportunity of seeing the Cuillin under deep snow—a great chance for the photographic enthusiast.

Next morning the sun came out and an entrancing vision presented itself to our gaze. Right opposite our windows, across the loch, Sgurr Alasdair, the highest peak of the range, raised its

sharp peak to the white clouds which were sweeping across the blue sky and here and there touching the mountain-tops (Plate 105). To the left was Sgurr Dearg, then Banachdich and the rest, all gleaming in a mantle of fresh snow (Plate 106).

These conditions meant postponing more serious expeditions among the mountains for a day or two, but they were well worth it, for the view of the mountains from the coast under their white mantle was superb.

Plate 107 shows Loch Brittle under more normal conditions, when much of the snow had melted; a brisk sea breeze was driving long lines of foaming breakers into the little bay, and threatening banks of cloud were forming along the mountain-tops.

It has always been my ambition to find a holiday resort where sea and mountain are combined, and Glen Brittle fulfils this ideal better than any other place I know. It possesses more open sea than most of the Highland lochs, and, besides the expeditions among the Cuillin Hills, there are very beautiful cliff walks when the weather is too unsettled for mountaineering. A few miles to the west there are high cliffs 600 to 700 feet high, with fine views across the water to Rum, and along the coast towards Talisker, where the cliffs are nearly 1000 feet high.

The hills on the west side of the glen are also

PLATE 106. Sgurr Banachdich from Loch Brittle. (p. 116)

PLATE 107. Loch Brittle. (p. 116)

PLATE 108. Cuillin from Beinn Staic. (p. 117)

PLATE 109. Skye Ponies, Glen Brittle. (p. 117)

worth a visit. One afternoon, when it had cleared up after a wet morning, but too late for a long walk, we made our way up Beinn Staic (1347 feet), from which there is an excellent panorama of the outer side of the main range of the Cuillin (Plate 108). In the illustration, and beginning on the left, we see Mhadaidh, Ghreadaidh, Banachdich and Dearg, the latter with a snowy summit which hides the famous Inaccessible Pinnacle, the actual top of the mountain. This picture shows clearly the way up Banachdich, which provides one of the easiest ascents for the non-climber. This route more or less follows the long snow-filled crack leading right up to the shoulder of the mountain.

There are also delightful walks along the opposite, or south-eastern, shore of Loch Brittle, all of which are suitable for unsettled or doubtful weather. The stretch of bog between the sea and the hills is dull, but may be enlivened by a troop of shaggy Skye ponies turned loose to find what sustenance they can in this inhospitable country (Plate 109). The walk along the shore, however, is interesting all the way; little rocky coves and headlands remind one of Cornwall, and the cliff scenery, towards the end of the point called Rudh' an Dunain, or Castle Point, is of a high order (Plate 110). Remains of an ancient fortification wall, six or eight feet thick, stretching

across the end of the promontory, have given it its name. When this was built the headland probably extended farther, as the space now enclosed seems hardly large enough to warrant such an elaborate protection.

These cliffs are not very high, but I am inclined to think that sea cliffs are more enjoyable when one is not too far above the water. It is pleasant to be near enough to see the clear blue water surging among the rocks, or, in stormy weather, to watch the waves dashing themselves into spray against this iron-bound coast.

The mountains of Rum, too, are a great object of interest all along these cliffs, and looked particularly fascinating after the heavy snowfall on our first arrival. Canna is less interesting, but even this comparatively flat island looks attractive in certain lights (Plate 111).

By cutting across the bog and following the coast it is possible to walk right round Gars Bheinn to Scavaig and Coruisk. The walk is a fine one, and enables the rarely visited western side of those lochs to be seen.

Some of the corries on the Loch Brittle side of the Cuillin are as fine as any. Before the snow melted we made our way up to Coire Lagan, under the crags of Sgurr Alasdair and Sgurr Mhic Choinnich. In these wintry conditions the scene looked quite Alpine (Plate 112), and the moun-

PLATE 110. Rudh' an Dunain. (p. 117)

PLATE III. Rudh' an Dunain and Canna. (p. 118)

tains appeared very formidable. The stone shoot, which is said to provide the only easy way up Alasdair, looked so steep and forbidding in the snow that we decided to leave it alone, a holiday being meant for pleasure rather than for hard and exacting toil.

We studied the easy route up Banachdich when looking at it from Beinn Staic, as mentioned a few pages back. There are one or two steep pitches, and an interminable number of stones large and small, but no other difficulties. The summit is a narrow ridge with tremendous precipices on the inner side, and pretty steep slopes on the outer. There are also good views of the neighbouring heights.

On our way down, and just before leaving the ridge, some thin clouds floated up from the sea and wreathed themselves round the mountains, producing some very striking effects, and adding enormously to the apparent scale of the peaks. Sgurr a' Ghreadaidh, for instance, seemed at times almost to take upon itself the form of Monte Rosa as seen from the Monte Moro Pass, and it was difficult to persuade oneself that this was really in Scotland, and a mountain not much over 3000 feet high (Plate 113).

The mountains towards the south end of the chain are usually more easily climbed than those farther north, though this advantage is partly

offset by their greater distance from any possible base of operations.

Sgurr Dearg can be reached from the Bealach Coire na Banachdich, or by the long ridge running up straight from Glen Brittle; though I must confess to a failure on the latter route, as we hesitated to attack the narrower part of the upper ridge in the tremendous gale then blowing, especially as we were hampered by the considerable amount of snow which still covered the rocks.

The Inaccessible Pinnacle, of course, must be left to expert climbers. This extraordinary horn rises from a ridge some way below what ought to be the top of the mountain, but it is a few feet higher, being the second summit of the whole chain.

Sgurr Sgumain, whose crags on the Glen Brittle side afford plenty of opportunities for the rock-climbing enthusiast, can be scaled from the end of the ridge or from Coir' a Ghrunnda, but perhaps the most repaying is Sgurr nan Eag (3037 feet), the ascent of which, from the back, requires nothing more than the usual expenditure of breath and energy needed for any of the steep and stony slopes of the Cuillin.

The view from this summit of Sgurr Alasdair, towering up over Coir' a Ghrunnda, with its little lake at the bottom set in its stony basin, is very striking (Plate 114). This wild corrie

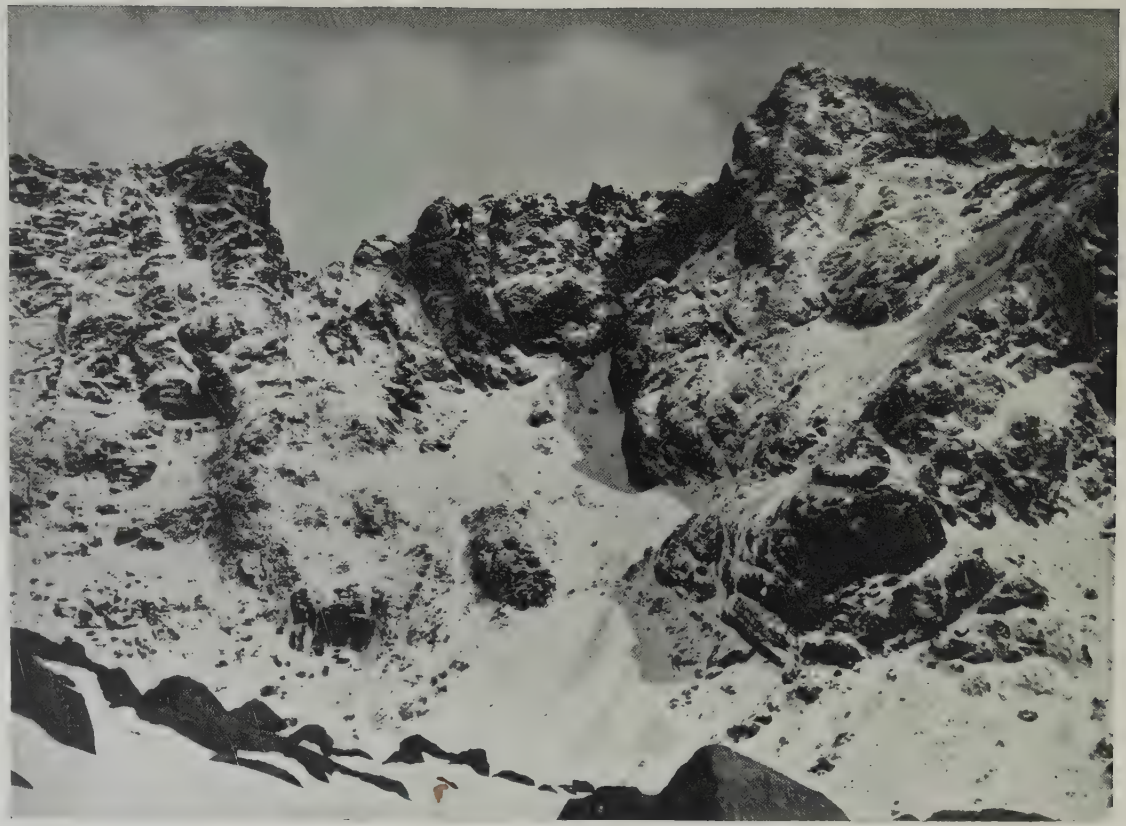

PLATE 112. Sgurr Alasdair from Coire Lagan. (p. 118)

should be visited for its own sake. It is quite a scramble to get into it from below, but there is no risk if the right way is taken. This lies well up the hill-side on the left, but even experienced climbers have got themselves into difficulties in bad weather by trying to follow the natural course by the stream at the bottom, where the way is blocked by smooth, slippery slabs by no means easy to negotiate.

From Sgurr nan Eag the ridge walk to Gars Bheinn looks very inviting, and the views ought to be very good, but we had used up all our plates on Sgurr nan Eag, and had spent so long over our photography that we had not time to put the matter to the test.

The best general view of the Cuillin is obtained from Elgol, a small village situated on the long promontory that runs south from Blaven, and limited accommodation can be obtained here. The backbone of this peninsula consists of rather featureless moorland, though it commands fine views all round, but the rocky coast, rising in places to real cliffs, provides scenery of a very high order, to which the clear waves of the western sea gurgling among the boulders add a special charm. When in addition to this there is the splendid view across the bay of the grandest mountain outline in Britain, it will easily be realised what a perfect place this is in which to

wander about and watch the showers sweeping across the noble hills across the water. In our picture (Plate 115) the mountain on the right is Blaven ; next it is Marsco rising over Camasunary at the end of Glen Sligachan. The shapely little peak in the middle is Sgurr-na-Stri, with the main ridge of the Cuillin fading into the cloud on the left. Gars Bheinn makes a fine pyramidal end to the ridge, but could not be included in this photograph without making it an inconvenient shape for book illustration.

This has, I am afraid, been a very inadequate description of Skye, both with pen and picture, for the island deserves a volume to itself. But, unfortunately, the cost of photographic reproduction sets its limits upon inclination, and I have, in consequence, attempted to give only a bare description of those scenes actually selected for illustration. I must therefore refer any of my readers who want a detailed account to the recently published volume on Skye forming part of *The Scottish Mountaineering Club Guide-Book*.[1] They may also satisfy their curiosity as to the rock-climbing possibilities of the island by consulting Mr George Abraham's book, or the numerous articles in climbing journals.

[1] Only the introductory volume and the sections dealing with Ben Nevis, the Cairn Gorms, and the Island of Skye have appeared so far (1928), but it gives promise of being a monumental work.

PLATE I. Sunset behind Rum. (p. 59)

PLATE 114. Sgurr Alasdair and Coir' a Ghrunnda from Sgurr nan Eag. (p. 120)

PLATE 115. Loch Scavaig and the Cuillin from Elgol. (p. 122)

I hope, however, that even this modest contribution will help to fill a gap, and, with the help of the photographs, will serve better than anything that has yet appeared to bring before the ordinary nature lover the charm of this wonderful island and the mainland opposite which it lies.

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